

IN
MORGAN'S
WAKE



A. HYATT VERRILL



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For a short distance the train ran close to the shore (Page 165).

IN MORGAN'S WAKE

BY

Alphons
A. HYATT VERRILL

AUTHOR OF *The Cruise of the Cormorant*, *Uncle Abner's Legacy*,
An American Crusoe, ETC.

ILLUSTRATED



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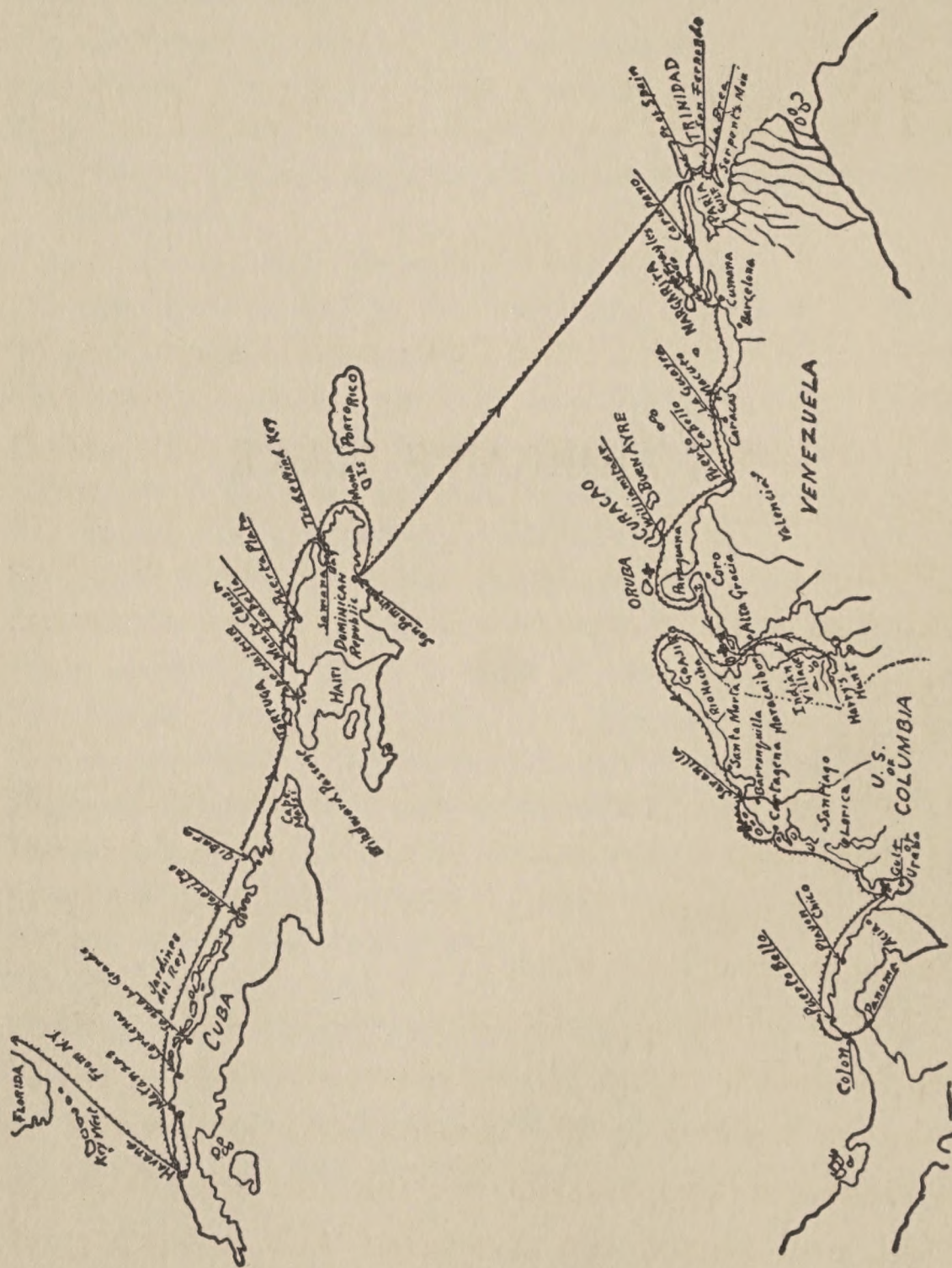
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IN MORGAN'S WAKE



MAP OF THE CRUISE IN MORGAN'S WAKE

IN MORGAN'S WAKE

CHAPTER I

AN UNEXPECTED ARRIVAL

"I WONDER if Captain Perkins has forgotten all about that cruise after treasure?" remarked Paul Rogers, as he and his cousin, Harry Thurston, were talking over their cruise in the "Cormorant" in the Rogers' library.

"I don't believe so," replied Harry. "Captain Perkins didn't seem like the sort of man who'd suggest that trip if he didn't mean it. Still," he continued, "it is funny we haven't heard anything from him for such a long time."

"Not a word since October," said Paul. "Even then he didn't say anything about the trip." As he spoke he walked to the window and looked out at the slushy streets and the pelting rain that froze as it fell, and glazed the sidewalks with a coating of ice. "Just to think of palm trees and green mountains, and warm, bright sunshine makes me wild to be down in the tropics such weather as this," he continued. "I do wish we'd get a letter asking us

to go. Wouldn't it be bully to get away from here until pleasant spring weather?"

"It would be fine," agreed Harry. "But I suppose we're mighty lucky to have been there last winter. Lots of boys have never seen a palm tree or any of those queer tropical places."

"Nor found dead pirates and maps of treasure," laughed Paul. "Do you know it all seems like a dream to me sometimes—until I look at the copy of the map, or see Rami waiting on the table."

"Well, if we're going this winter it's about time we heard from the captain," Harry declared. "Here it's nearly the first of the year, and we'll never have a better chance to get away. I heard Uncle Charles tell Mr. Anderson that business was dull. Aunt Kitty's going on from Denver to the opening of the Exposition, and we've nothing to keep us here since the school closed on account of that diphtheria scare."

"Only one thing wanting," said Paul. "That's the invitation from the captain. We can't very well go without that, you know."

"Perhaps he's gone to the Exposition," suggested Harry. "He might take it into his head to sail there in the 'Cormorant.'"

"No use in supposing," declared Paul, "for all we know he may be sailing up here to surprise us. He loves to surprise people, and I don't suppose a

trip from Barbados to New York in winter would trouble an old sailor like him."

"I'd be mighty glad to see him—here, or anywhere else," said Harry. "And the 'Cormorant's' cabin was comfortable enough for anyone. Whew! Do you remember how cold it was when we left last year?"

"Do I?" exclaimed Paul. "It makes me shiver even now when I think of standing out on deck that first day."

At this instant the boys heard the doorbell ring, and a moment after Rami glided, like a ghost, past the library door on his way to answer the summons.

"Hello, Gunga Din!" exclaimed a hearty voice, as Rami opened the door. "Know me, ye old rascal? Bet ye do. How's the boys? Lord, but it's nasty out."

The boys sprang to their feet and rushed pellmell into the hall for, by the words and the peal of laughter which followed, the boys knew that the visitor was none other than Captain Perkins.

"Well, well, well!" cried the ruddy-faced captain, as he caught sight of the two boys. "Thought I'd surprise ye again, but guess I missed stays this time. Ye don't seem a mite surprised. Who tipped ye off that I was heading for this port? Lor' bless your hearts, I'm glad to see ye."

"But we *are* surprised, Captain Perkins," declared Paul. "We didn't *dream* that you were within a thousand miles of here."

"And the funniest part of it is we were just talking about you," said Harry, and added, "Paul even suggested that perhaps you were sailing up to surprise us."

" 'Speak of angels,' you know," laughed the captain, as Rami helped him off with his rain-soaked great coat. "Well, I'm here, lads, safe, sound and with all standing, so to speak. How's Mr. Rogers? Bet I'll surprise him."

"Father hasn't come in yet," replied Paul. "We expect him any minute. My! but *won't* he be surprised."

"Do tell us about your trip," cried Harry, as the three entered the library and Captain Perkins rubbed his hands before the fire. "How long did it take, and was it very rough?"

"And how's the old 'Cormorant'?" interrupted Paul. "When did you get in, and where's the boat? I'd just love to see her again."

"Ease off a bit, lads," cried the jolly little captain; "one thing at a time, and I'll try to hold my course and read ye my log shipshape and Bristol-fashion, as the saying goes."

"Made the trip from Morro light to quarantine in four days, sixteen hours and twenty-three minutes

eggzactly. Pretty heavy weather, too—nor'easter off Hatteras and thick as blazes off the Jersey coast. Never started a stick, stay or rivet. Boat's a-layin' over to Clark's stores, and the old 'Cormorant's' just the same bully little ship as ever."

"Four days and sixteen hours!" cried Paul incredulously. "Why, that's as fast as steam. It must have blown a perfect hurricane for the 'Cormorant' to make such time as that."

Captain Perkins roared with laughter until his face grew scarlet. "Course she couldn't make such time," he cried. "Who said anything about sailing up in the yacht? No winter sailing in these latitudes for Cap'n Frank. No, sirree, not when ocean-going steamers are a-running."

"Then you didn't come up on the 'Cormorant' after all?" exclaimed Paul.

"Nope; came up on the 'Guanica'; Sanders, master, and——"

The sound of a key in the front door interrupted him.

"There comes Uncle Charles," cried Harry.

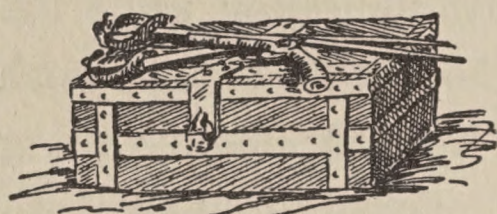
A moment later Mr. Rogers entered the library and Captain Perkins sprang forward and grasped his hand. "Well, I surprised you, at any rate," he chuckled, as he noted Mr. Rogers' look of blank amazement at seeing him.

"Bet ye didn't expect to find Cap'n Frank a-set-

tin' in yer own house, Rogers. Well, well! I *am* glad to see ye."

"It's certainly a most welcome surprise," declared Mr. Rogers, as he wrung the captain's hand. "I can't tell you how glad I am to see you so well and hearty. When and how did you arrive? You surely didn't come in the 'Cormorant.'"

"Just been a-telling the boys," replied the captain. "Came in this P. M. in the 'Guanica.' 'Spect



I might as well spin the whole yarn. Was over to Havana on a visit when I run afoul of old Bill San-

ders—used to be my second on the 'Ruby'—master of the 'Guanica.' Well, the long an' short of it was that Sanders says, 'Cap'n Frank, why don't ye take a cruise along o' me to New York and back?' and I said to myself, 'Cap'n Frank, here's yer chance; go along with Bill Sanders, and bring back Rogers and the boys and go along on that treasure hunting trip ye promised. It's a mortal shame to have them youngsters a-freezing up north, when they might just as well be a-sailing the old Spanish Main.' So here I be, and you're all a-coming along with me when the 'Guanica' sails, and we'll spend the rest o' the winter following old Harry Morgan's wake."

Rami now announced that dinner was served and the party entered the dining-room.

“See ye’ve got the old Hindu chap with ye still,” remarked Captain Perkins, as Rami left the room. “Bring him along, too. He’ll enjoy getting away from cold weather, I’ll be bound, and ’twill be a Godsend to have him a-cooking grub on the ‘Guanica.’ ”

“What line does the ‘Guanica’ belong to?” asked Mr. Rogers. “The name isn’t familiar to me.”

Captain Perkins laughed heartily. “O’ course not,” he declared. “She’s just an old tramp, but a mighty comfortable old hooker, with a clean pair of heels an’ as fine engines as ye’d wish to see.”

“But I didn’t know they carried passengers on tramps,” said Paul.

“True as a trivet,” cried the captain. “An’ we’re not a-goin’ as passengers. Guests of the owners, ye see, an’ friends o’ Captain Sanders.”

“I’m afraid we’ll be presuming too much on the owners’ hospitality,” said Mr. Rogers. “Isn’t it rather unusual for four strangers to take possession of a ship without an invitation?”

Captain Perkins leaned back in his chair and roared. “You bet ’tis,” he declared. “But ye needn’t worry over that. Owners sent their invite along with me. Ye see, the ‘Guanica’ belongs to a company doing business under the style and name o’ Frank J. Perkins, Esquire, as the British lawyer chaps say.”

"You mean that you own the 'Guanica'?" cried Harry.

"That's the idea, son," chuckled the captain. "Bought her last fall for a song, just after the war broke out. Used to be a German ship and the British seized her at Bridgetown. Bought her in at auction, put her under the Stars and Stripes, and turned her over to Sanders. Sugar trade's been picking up while them 'dear cousins' of Kings and Kaisers are scrapping, and Sanders has free rein to take the old tub wherever he thinks cargoes are best. Hadn't seen the ship since I bought her 'til I run acrost her in Havana."

"Hurrah!" cried Paul. "Then we'll sail on a ship that's really been seized in the war, and on a tramp, too. I've often wondered how it seemed to travel on one of them."

"I judge you left the 'Cormorant' at Havana," remarked Mr. Rogers.

"Snug as ye please, berthed at Machina wharf," replied the captain. "Tom's still a-sailoring with me, and I left him in charge. By the way, what's become of that darkey chap—Pete, I think ye called him?"

"He's doing finely," said Mr. Rogers. "He's very smart and has gone rapidly ahead in school. He's now at Tuskegee, and is taking a course in tropical agriculture."

The meal was now over and again in the library the conversation turned to the last winter's cruise and West Indian reminiscences.

"Did you ever hear anything more from that Portuguese sailor who ran off with the launch?" Mr. Rogers inquired.

"Lor' bless me! I forgot all about telling ye. Yes, sirree, that scalawag was taken off that little key by a trading boat bound from Grenada to Martinique. Dunno what became of him after that. Bad pennies always turn up, ye know. Shouldn't be surprised if he crosses our bows again yet."

"Stranger things have happened," said Mr. Rogers musingly. "Coincidences often occur in real life which would appear impossible in fiction."

"I'll love to see Cuba," remarked Paul. "We've been reading about it and it must be a mighty interesting place."

"And so different from the other islands we visited," added Harry. "We've never seen a Spanish place, and I suppose Cuba is thoroughly Spanish."

"Not so much as 'twas," said Captain Perkins. "Since the Spanish war Cuba's got to be pretty much American in lots of ways. Ye'll see plenty to interest ye though, I'll wager."

"Were there ever any pirates or buccaneers there?" asked Paul.

"Lor' bless your heart, yes," cried the captain.

“Old Morgan and Drake and all the rest of the crowd used to hold up Cuba pretty near by schedule, ye might say; but the worst pirates they ever had was the Spanish officials who used to govern the place. They made more money than old Morgan, and they didn't hide it away where other chaps can find it either.”

“Do you think we'll find any treasure?” asked Harry.

“Likely as not,” replied the captain. “I've been a-poking around a bit since I saw you boys last, and I've overhauled a few yarns that sound likely, and I've got to wind'ard o' the whereabouts of some facts we'll investigate. Nothing like being prepared, and I'm a-going to take a proper diving outfit along o' this cruise. Makes me feel a reg'lar kid again to think o' hunting after buried treasure.”

The boys were eager to hear all the latest news from the West Indies, and plied Captain Perkins with one inquiry after another regarding the many places they had visited and the many friends they had made on their cruise of the preceding winter.

There was so much to talk about that it was very late when the boys finally bade Captain Frank good-night and went to bed to dream of plate-laden galleons, pirate ships and waving palms.

CHAPTER II

SOUTHWARD HO

FOR the next few days the boys were very busy. The "Guanica" would be ready to sail in a week, Captain Perkins said, and there was much to be done in preparation for the long trip that Captain Frank planned.

The boys accompanied the jolly little captain everywhere, and showed him all the sights of the great city, which he had not visited in many years.

On the other hand, he led them into many odd places and strange corners which the boys had never seen, and it is a question whether the captain learned and saw more by the boys' help than they discovered by the captain's aid.

The tarry-smelling stores and shops along the water-front; the strange restaurants and eating-places, where seamen from every part of the world came to dine; the stuffy, smoke-filled shipping offices; the great, clean, airy sail-lofts, and countless other places which are familiar to those "who go down to the sea in ships" were all new and strange to the boys.

Everyone seemed to know Cap'n Frank, for he'd been a famous skipper of deep-water craft in his day, and sailor-men have long memories. Whenever he met an old crony a few minutes were spent in swapping yarns or reminiscences of old times, and the boys found the keenest enjoyment in listening to these stories of the sea.

Several trips were also made to Brooklyn, where the "Guanica" was berthed at Clark's Stores, while lighters and scows, stevedores and trucks, worked ceaselessly at unloading the thousands of bags of brown sugar from the big tramp's capacious hold.

"What do ye think o' her for a yacht?" cried Captain Perkins, when the boys approached the ship for the first time.

"My, but she's big!" exclaimed Paul.

"She looks as if she'd stand most any kind of weather," said Harry. "The old 'Cormorant' wouldn't seem much larger than a rowboat beside her."

"Pretty nigh ten thousand tons," declared the captain. "Ye think she looks big now. Wait till she's light, and ye'll think she's twice as big. Come on aboard, lads, and meet the skipper and look at your berths."

The boys had never boarded a freighter before, and looked about with interest as they gained the "Guanica's" decks. White paint, gleaming brass

and holystoned decks were lacking, and from stem to stern there stretched bare, steel decks, broken by great yawning hatches, greasy donkey engines and an isolated bridge above the engine-room superstructure.

“Why, I don’t see any cabins,” exclaimed Harry, as he glanced about at the vast area of deck.

Captain Frank chuckled. “Aft there,” he cried, pointing to a tiny house at the stern, and, turning to a passing sailor, he inquired if the captain was aboard. They found Captain Sanders in the chart-room, poring over a mass of manifests, bills of lading, invoices and other papers, and half hidden in a dense haze of smoke from a huge cigar at which he was puffing. He rose as they entered, and greeted the boys cordially when Captain Perkins introduced them. The boys could scarcely repress a smile at the contrast afforded by the “Guanica’s” skipper and jolly Captain Frank, for Captain Sanders stood six feet four, was thin, angular, and tanned a mahogany brown, and spoke slowly and deliberately in a voice scarcely louder than a whisper. Captain Perkins, on the other hand, was short and stout, with ruddy face and a voice and laugh which could be heard the length of the ship.

“Regular long and short of it, eh, lads?” he roared. “Bet that’s what ye were thinking of,” he added, and burst into hearty laughter.

Sanders joined in the merriment and remarked: "Queer how some folks get all the latitude and others nothin' but longitude, so to speak. Mind the time, Frank, when folks used to chaff us and holler out, 'Look at the tug a-towin' o' the torps'l yard,' when we passed up the street together?"

The boys took a great liking to Captain Sanders as he showed them over the ship and, while there was not much to be seen, they were greatly interested, as everything was so different from the passenger ships to which they were accustomed. The cabins they found were neat and clean, with comfortable berths, a snug little saloon, and, being far aft, they were free from the sickening, sweetish odor of molasses that pervaded the rest of the vessel.

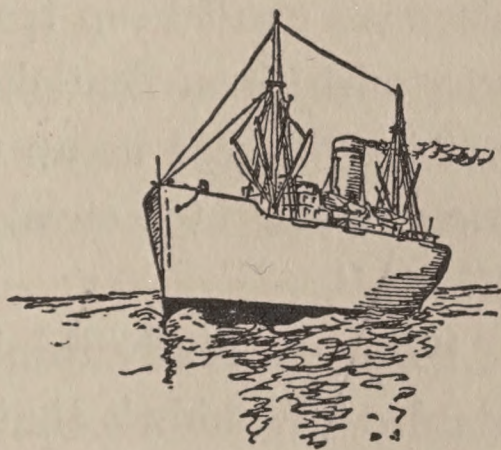
"I don't see how they'll manage to get all that sugar out and the new cargo loaded in a week," said Paul, as the three left the "Guanica." "There seems such a lot to do and such a short time to do it in."

"Don't ye fret about that, son," cried Captain Frank. "Bill Sanders is a driver, slow as he seems; regular proper sort of sailor-man, and if he says 'sail Saturday,' Saturday 'tis."

By Friday night everything was ready, stores of provisions, spare sails, cordage, and even a complete diving outfit were aboard the ship and the luggage was stowed in the cabin.

Shortly before noon on Saturday the last hawser was cast loose, fussy tugs dragged the "Guanica" from her berth into the river, and Mr. Rogers, the two boys and Captain Perkins waved good-bye to the few friends who had come to see them off, while Rami took possession of the galley and busied himself with the midday meal.

Presently the great hull vibrated to the throb of the engines, the powerful screw churned the dirty harbor waters, a hoarse farewell roar from the whistle was answered by the tooting of the tugs, and the "Guanica" headed toward the narrows and the open sea.



It was a bright, sunny winter's day, but the air was sharp and chill, and long before they reached Fort Wadsworth the boys were glad to seek the shelter of the wheelhouse.

Presently their attention was attracted by a gray-hulled torpedo boat, which passed the "Guanica" under full speed and with a mountainous bow wave that rose far above her forward rails.

"Where is she going in such a hurry?" asked Paul of Captain Sanders, who stood near.

"Headin' to overhaul that ship yonder," replied the skipper, pointing to a big steamer a mile or two

distant. "One o' the government's patrol," he added, "stationed here to keep tabs on the shippin' and prevent any o' the interned German ships from slippin' out."

"They didn't say anything to us," remarked Harry. "How do they know we're not German?"

Captain Sanders laughed. "Trust 'em for that," he replied. "There ain't sech a big fleet o' ships flyin' the Stars and Stripes that any green midshipman can't keep track o' 'em. 'Tain't the same way with them Britishers outside, though. Like as not they'll hold us up to make sure we ain't a German tryin' to sneak out under cover o' Old Glory."

"Do you really think we will be stopped?" cried Paul. "Wouldn't that be exciting?"

"Well, they stopped me last trip out," replied Sanders. "If the same cruiser's hangin' round they may recognize us and say nothin'; but, if it's another ship that's on duty, I expect they'll board us. Ye see the 'Guanica's' built and sparred so that Hamburg's written all over her, an' them Britishers don't take many chances. Better safe than sorry's their motto, an' they don't have nothin' to amuse 'em except to board ships."

The pilot-station boat was now close ahead, and presently the big tramp slowed down. The engines ceased to throb and a yawl boat came dancing over

the waves. A moment later the pilot shook hands all around, scrambled down the ladder, jumped into his tiny craft and waved a cheery good-bye as the "Guanica" once more gathered headway and pointed her bow toward the south.

"Oh, look, Uncle Charles; there's a warship," cried Harry a few minutes after the pilot had been dropped. "See, off beyond the lightship," he continued. "I can see her quite plainly with the glasses."

The others looked in the direction Harry indicated and soon made out the vessel whose lines and military masts proclaimed her a fighting ship beyond doubt.

"She's a Britisher, all right," declared Captain Perkins, after a glance. "Looks like the 'Berwick'—leastways one o' the same class."

"I do believe she's heading for us," exclaimed Paul. "There's smoke pouring from her funnels and she's turned this way."

"Right ye are, lad," said Captain Frank, as he watched the distant cruiser through his glasses. "Maybe she's just a-watchin' us, and then again she may stop us for a bit. She's coming along at a mighty good clip, so 'twon't be long before we know."

The lean gray cruiser was rapidly lessening the distance which separated her from the "Guanica,"

and she could now be plainly seen without the glasses.

"There go her signals!" cried Harry. "I wonder what they say?" As he spoke a string of bunting soared aloft at the cruiser's foremast.

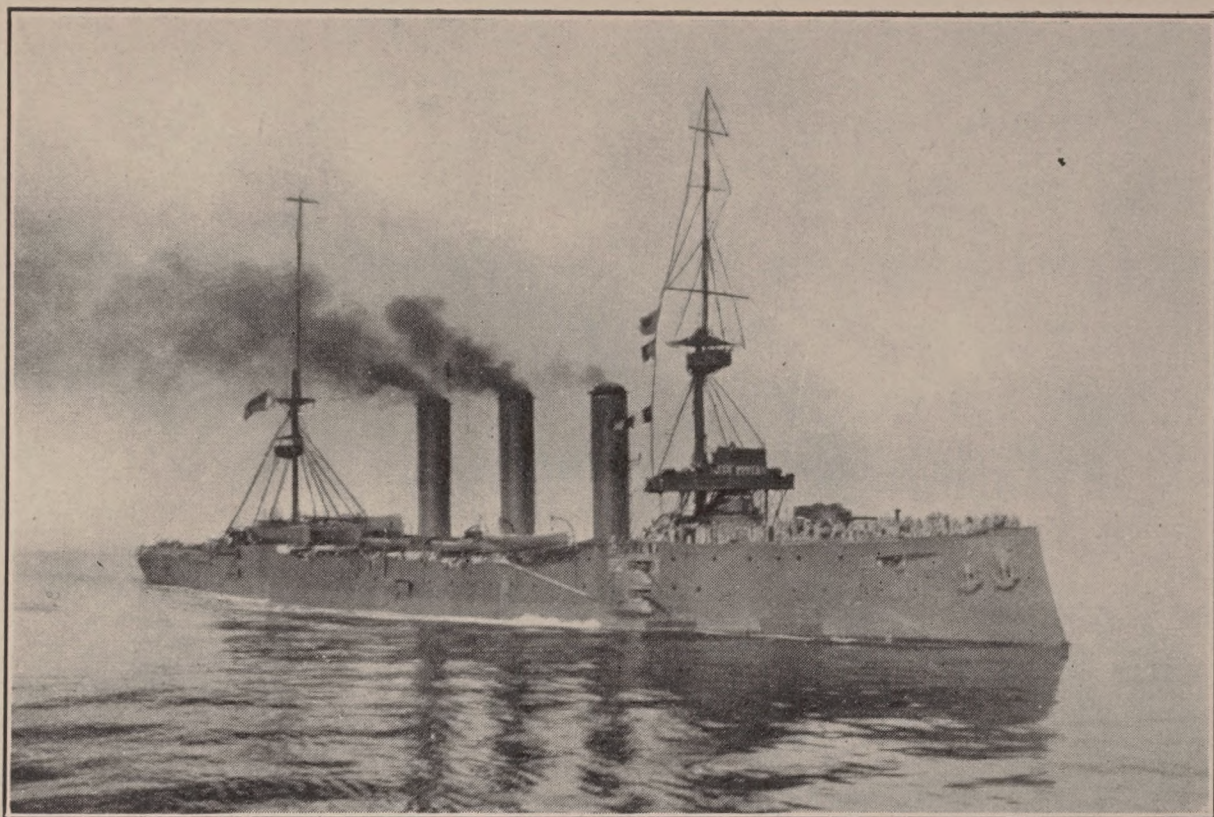
"'What ship is that? Heave to,' " replied Captain Perkins.

"Well, there's not much excitement in being held up as easy as all that," said Paul in a disappointed tone. "I thought they'd fire a shot across our bows."

Captain Perkins burst into a hearty laugh. "Lor' bless your heart!" he cried. "So ye want to have excitement already, eh? Well, well! This 'ere's a cruise after pirates' treasure, and we might as well have everything we can to make it real exciting. Don't pay any heed to them flags, Bill," he continued, addressing Captain Sanders. "Just shove the old packet ahead for all she's worth, and give those chaps a run for their money. Good thing to give 'em a bit of exercise now and again and more fun for the boys."

Captain Sanders smiled, gave an order to a man who was preparing to send up the code flags, and rang for full speed.

For a few minutes the English officers seemed puzzled, and merely kept their distance, apparently waiting for their signals to be obeyed. Then, as it



A string of bunting soared aloft.



The warship boat was soon alongside.

dawned upon them that the tramp was paying no attention to their orders, and was actually drawing away from them, the cruiser dashed forward with redoubled speed, and through their glasses the boys could see hurrying bluejackets swarming to their stations.

"Bet she thinks we're German for sure," chuckled Captain Perkins.

"Look at that, lads," he cried as a white puff of smoke burst from one of the cruiser's forward barbettes.

"Did she fire at us?" exclaimed Harry. "I didn't see any splash in the water."

"Just a blank cartridge to warn us," laughed the captain. "Next one will be solid shot."

The dull boom of the first shot now reached those on the "Guanica" and almost at the same instant another puff of smoke issued from the cruiser's guns and with a tremendous splash the shot tore the sea into a great fountain of foam a short distance ahead of the tramp.

"Reckon that's about close enough," laughed Captain Frank, and at a signal from the bridge the engine stopped and the "Guanica" slowly lost headway and came to a standstill.

Harry and Paul watched the cruiser with interest as a boat was quickly lowered from her davits.

Manned by armed sailors and with an officer very

erect and stiff in its stern, the little craft came bobbing toward the tramp while hundreds of men crowded upon the forward deck of the warship and gazed interestedly at the strange ship which had so brazenly defied them.

Very soon the boat was alongside, the ladder was lowered and followed by a couple of bluejackets the lieutenant clambered onto the "Guanica's" deck.

Harry poked Paul in the ribs and chuckled as he caught sight of the officer at close range, for his boyish face, pink cheeks and monocle contrasted ludicrously with his dignity and vast importance which the lieutenant evidently desired to impress upon those aboard the "Guanica."

Captain Perkins fairly choked with suppressed laughter, but Captain Sanders never even smiled as he greeted the officer and handed him the ship's papers.

"They appear quite correct," remarked the officer after carefully looking over the papers. "But really, you know," he added, "your actions are deucedly suspicious. You jolly well *knew* what our signals meant, sir. Do you realize that you openly defied a ship of His Majesty's navy, sir? You take great risks, Captain Sanders; why, we—er—er—might have actually sunk you, sir."

"Sink nothin'," remarked Captain Sanders contemptuously. "I'm an American citizen and

a-sailin' an American ship to a neutral port. You fellers are durned nuisances anyhow. Go along back to yer old ship an' don't hold us up here all day."

At this juncture Captain Frank appeared, his merriment under control.

"Well, well, Lieutenant!" he cried. "Just thought I'd give you lads a little excitement and exercise. Tell your captain to accept these with my compliments and take these for yourself." He handed the lieutenant several boxes of Havana cigars.

The officer at once forgot his haughty demeanor, chatted pleasantly for a few moments and bidding everyone good luck and good-bye he climbed into his boat and boarded his cruiser while the "Guanica" again resumed her interrupted voyage.

The next two days were uneventful and the boys spent their time discussing their coming cruise, studying maps and charts and listening to the sea stories told by Captain Sanders. They found him most entertaining, for he had sailed the seven seas since a small boy and had met with innumerable adventures.

"What a funny looking cloud that is," said Harry as he stood on the bridge one morning.

"I've been a-studyin' it," remarked Captain Sanders. "Looks to me as if 'twas a-tryin' to form

a waterspout. Better watch it close an' maybe ye'll see somethin' int'restin'."

"I'd like mighty well to see a waterspout," declared Paul. "Do they ever cause any damage to ships?"

"Not often," replied the skipper. "They don't move very fast and a steamer can mos' generally get out o' their track. In the old sailin' days we sometimes got struck, but savin' a few torn sails and a heap o' water on board they didn't do much harm."

"Oh, look, look!" cried Harry. "See how that cloud is dipping down and whirling round."

"She's a formin' all right," exclaimed Captain Sanders. "There, she starts; see the water a b'ilin' up."

From the scurrying clouds a funnel-shaped mass was slowly descending toward the sea and from the water below a little mountain of churning, foaming water was rising up. Even as the captain spoke the cloud seemed to swoop down, the mound of water spun into the air and like a flash the two were joined by a slender column of whirling, revolving water.

"Isn't that wonderful!" cried Harry, while Paul dived into the chart house and reappeared with his camera.

The waterspout was now rapidly approaching the ship and Captain Sanders ordered the quartermas-



The waterspout rushed past the "Guanica."

ter to alter his course slightly. A minute later the spout rushed past the "Guanica" with a roar and Paul snapped it as it raced along.

A few hundred yards beyond the ship the spout broke and with a tremendous noise the water, which had been drawn into the clouds, poured back to the sea in a mighty deluge.

"Well, I'm glad we saw that," said Harry.

"And I'm glad I left my camera handy," said Paul. "I do hope I got a good picture."

The weather was now warm and balmy and the boys frequently noticed the floating gulf weed, Portuguese men-of-war and flying fishes with which they had become familiar on their former trip.

When he came on deck the fourth day out Harry cried out in surprise as he caught sight of a low-lying shore of white sand, fringed with shrubs and palm trees.

"Is that Cuba?" he enquired of Captain Sanders.

"No; Florida," replied the skipper. "We'll pass Palm Beach in a few hours."

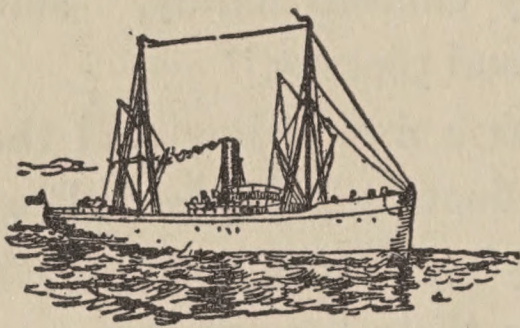
"Why, I didn't realize we would run so close to shore," said Paul. "When we came down in the 'Cormorant' we never sighted land until we saw Porto Rico."

"Your course took you about a thousand miles further east," replied the captain. "Havana's a good deal to the west'ard o' Florida and we stand close

in to save time and keep out of the strongest part of the Gulf Stream. Goin' north we stand further to the east'ard and get the benefit of the current."

All day long the "Guanica" skirted the low Florida coast and the boys studied the barren, sandy wastes, the low palmettos and the occasional hotels and houses through their glasses. Now and then they passed a tiny launch or fishing boat and

several tank steamers and small coasters were met.



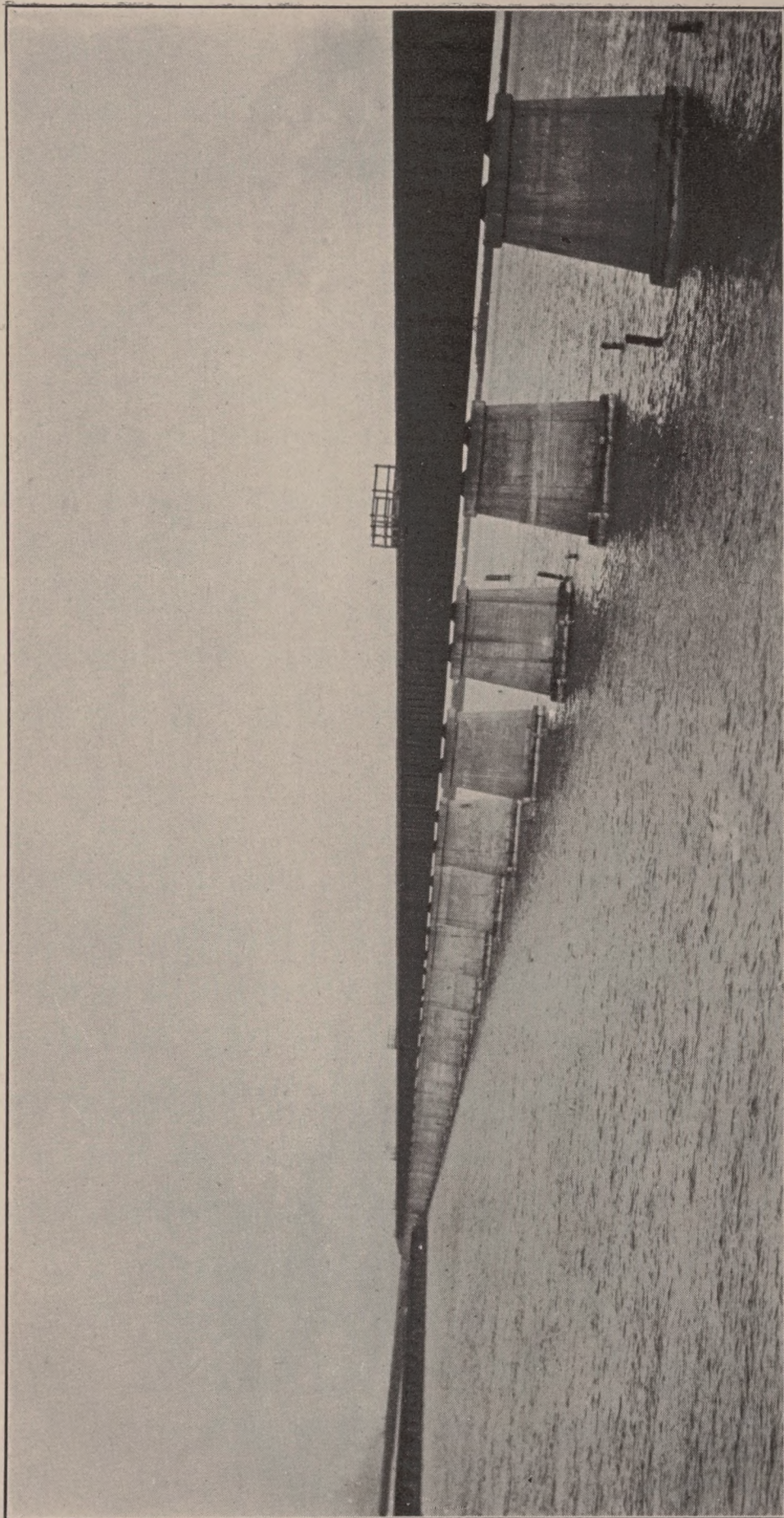
"Doesn't it make it companionable and nice to sail so close to shore

and see so many other boats," remarked Paul. "It's almost like sailing along a river or a lake."

As they approached the Keys the captain called the boys' attention to several wrecks lying rusted and deserted upon little reefs.

"It's a dangerous spot to navigate in thick weather," he remarked. "The water's shoal an' full o' reefs an' even in rough weather a ship's pretty likely to run aground betwixt waves."

The boys were also interested in the numerous lighthouses, several of which stood high out of water on slender iron legs far from land. Gradually the shore grew more distant and openings of water appeared here and there.



The boys saw the wonderful viaduct.

“What on earth makes that smoke?” asked Harry, after looking intently shoreward with his glasses for a long time. “It seems to come from that bit of land and the land seems to really move along. I can’t make it out.”

Captain Perkins, who stood near, laughed merrily. “That’s a railroad train,” he exclaimed. “Ever hear of the railway that runs to Key West?”

“Why, of course we have,” replied Harry, “but I didn’t realize it could be seen from here.”

“That’s the trestle ’twixt a couple of the little Keys,” explained the captain. “Later on ye’ll get a glimpse of the long bridge across to Key West. Then ye’ll see nothin’ more ’til old Morro shows up.”

Early in the afternoon the boys saw the wonderful viaduct which connects the smaller keys with Key West and were fortunate to catch a glimpse of a train crossing over it and sharply silhouetted against the glowing evening sky. By the time supper was over a twinkling light far astern was all that marked the land they had left and through the soft blackness of the tropic night the “Guanica” plowed steadily onward towards Cuba.

CHAPTER III

THE PEARL OF THE ANTILLES

THE boys were awakened by the stopping of the ship's engines. So accustomed had they become to the steady throb and jar of the machinery during the past five days that the silence seemed almost oppressive.

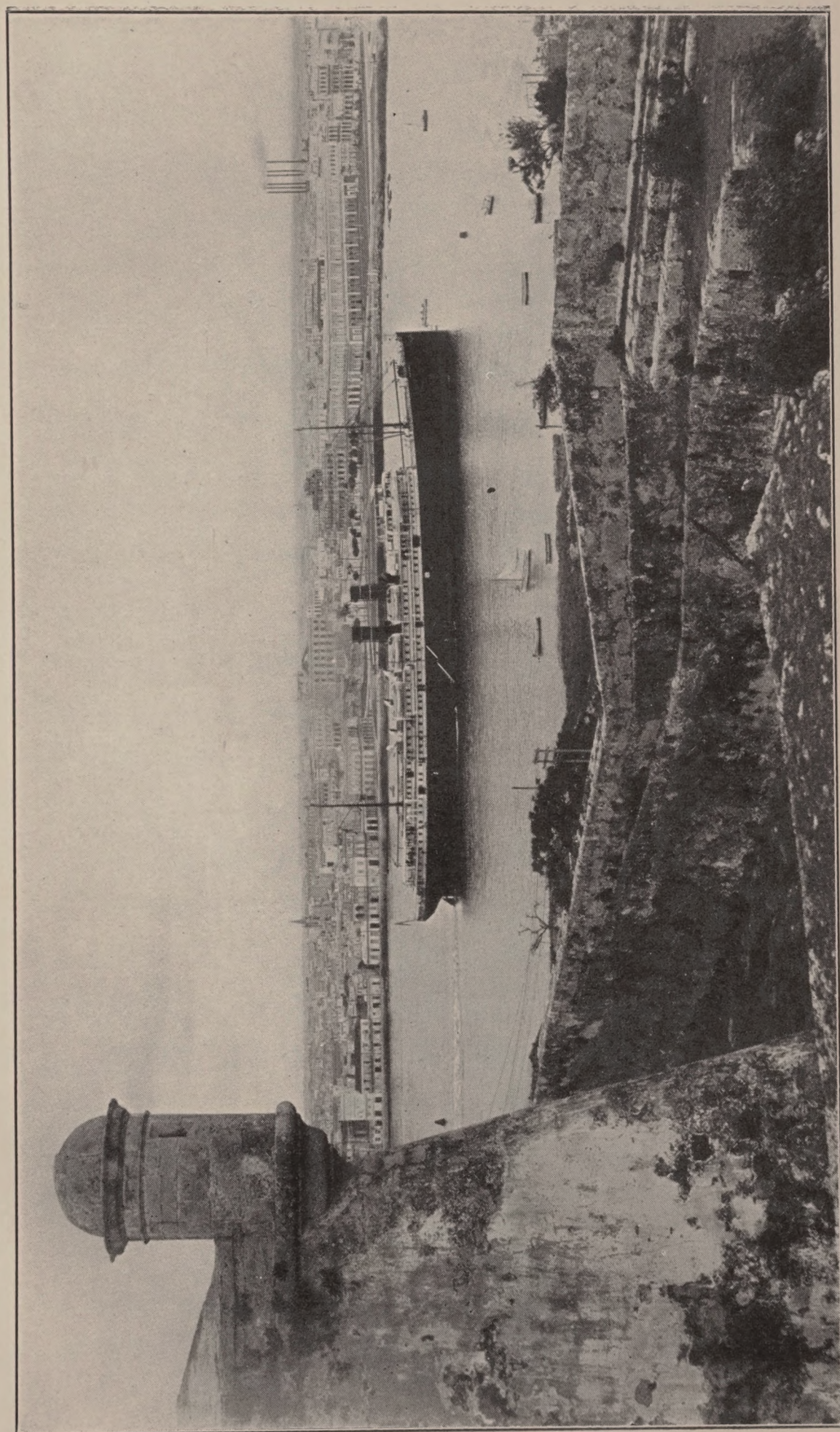
"I wonder what the matter is?" said Harry. "My, but isn't it still!"

Suddenly, clear and distinct through the open port, came the sound of a cock crowing. Harry sprang from his berth, ran to the port-hole and looked out.

"Oh, Paul!" he cried, "we're right close to land and day's just breaking. Hurry up and get dressed. We've really reached Cuba."

Paul needed no second call and after a quick glance through the port he hurried into his clothes and a few moments later both boys were on deck.

The "Guanica" was resting motionless upon the dark sea and a short distance before her land loomed dark against the sky which was just paling with the coming dawn. From the shore faint sounds of



Between old Morro and La Punta fort.

awakening life could be heard; the crowing of cocks, the occasional bark of a dog, the sound of a church bell and the thin, distant whistle of a locomotive. Stretching from the water's edge to the shadowy hills was a great sea of twinkling lights and dimly outlined by their glare were countless buildings.

"Goodness, that looks like a big city," exclaimed Paul, as the boys stood gazing towards the shore.

"So 'tis," said Captain Sanders' voice behind them. "You're up bright an' early I see, boys," he continued. "Run up on the bridge an' you'll soon see as pretty a sight as the world can show—Havana by sunrise."

Gradually the eastern sky grew rosy and golden and like a dissolving view Cuba and its lovely capital city was unfolded to the boys' gaze.

To the left the ancient Morro, with its lofty lighthouse, frowned from its rocky promontory and to the right—beyond a narrow strait of water—the town stretched for miles along the shore and far back to soft green hills. The flat-roofed, multi-colored houses glowed in the rosy morning light, here and there taller modern buildings stood boldly forth against the sky and from countless hearths tiny columns of smoke rose in the still, soft air.

Presently the sun rose clear above the rim of the sea, the lone-starred flag of Cuba fluttered from the flagstaff on Morro and a bell jangled in the "Gua-

nica's'' engine-room. Slowly the big tramp moved towards the harbor entrance, passed between the guns of old Morro and the low-lying ancient "Punta" fort and entered the great inner bay.

To Paul and Harry, who had seen only the smaller Antilles, Havana's harbor was a revelation and they constantly uttered exclamations of surprise. The huge stone and concrete docks, and great warehouses, the city spreading for miles, the forest of



masts and funnels and the numerous great ocean steamers lying at the docks and moored to buoys in the harbor were all wonderful to the boys. They had read much about Cuba and Havana, but no description had

prepared them for the beauty of the actual scene and nothing they had read had given them an adequate idea of the extent or bustle of Cuba's capital.

Everywhere upon the bay launches, tugs and ferryboats plowed back and forth. Beneath the heights of old Cabañas several huge liners were busy coaling. A white-hulled United Fruit steamer slipped by, outward bound, as the "Guanica" picked her way to a mooring and from the docks and streets came the ceaseless, busy hum of a metropolis. Everything was so strange, so foreign and so fasci-



The Ancient Morro with its lofty lighthouse.

7



It looked like a picture of Venice.

nating that the boys could scarcely ask questions fast enough.

The beautiful domed Produce Exchange attracted their attention and Harry made the apt remark that "it looked like a picture of Venice." They inquired about the towering stacks of the immense powerhouse, they admired the toy-like villages that dotted the hills across the bay and they hurried here, there and everywhere about the ship striving to see everything as the "Guanica" steamed up the harbor.

As Machina Wharf came into view Harry uttered a glad shout and seized Paul's arm. "There she is," he cried. "Don't you see her, Paul? There, just back of that yachty-looking steamer. I'd know her anywheres. Hurrah for the 'Cormorant'!"

"Now I see her," exclaimed Paul. "Isn't it bully to see her again. I wonder if they see us?"

Both boys waved their hats wildly and in response a white-clad figure rose from the "Cormorant's" deck, waved a cap to the boys and a moment later the little flag at the yacht's mizzen dipped thrice in welcome.

"That's Tom, I'll bet," declared Harry. "My! but it makes me feel almost homesick to see the old 'Cormorant' again."

Captain Perkins, who stood near, chuckled. "Ye've got a sharp pair o' eyes, lad, to sight her so quick," he exclaimed. "Lor' bless ye, it *does* seem

like meeting an old friend to see the yacht again."

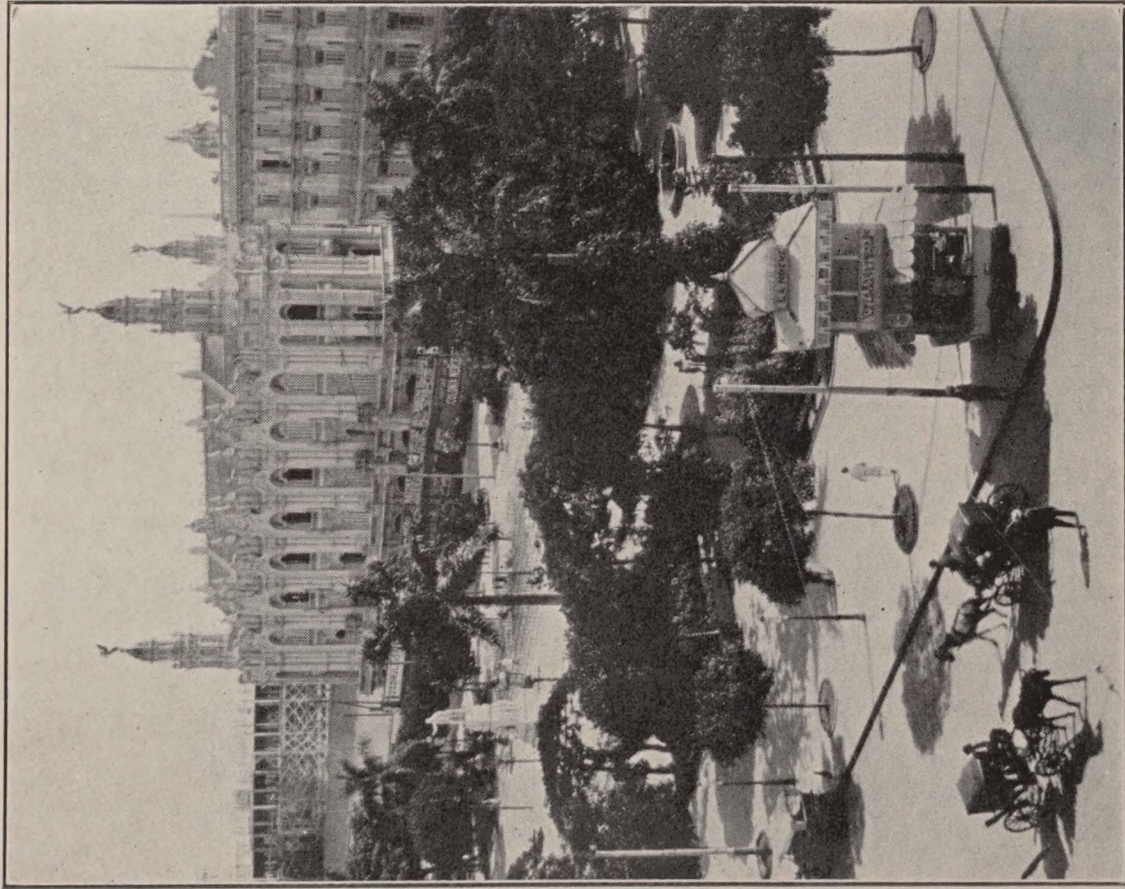
The "Guanica" now stopped, she was made fast to a big iron buoy and the boys waited impatiently for the quarantine and customs boats to come alongside. The formalities were soon over and Captain Perkins bundled Mr. Rogers and the boys into a waiting launch.

"We'll run over to Machina Wharf," he remarked, "have a look at the 'Cormorant' and then off for a shore breakfast and a ride about town. Early morning's the time to see Havana, lads."

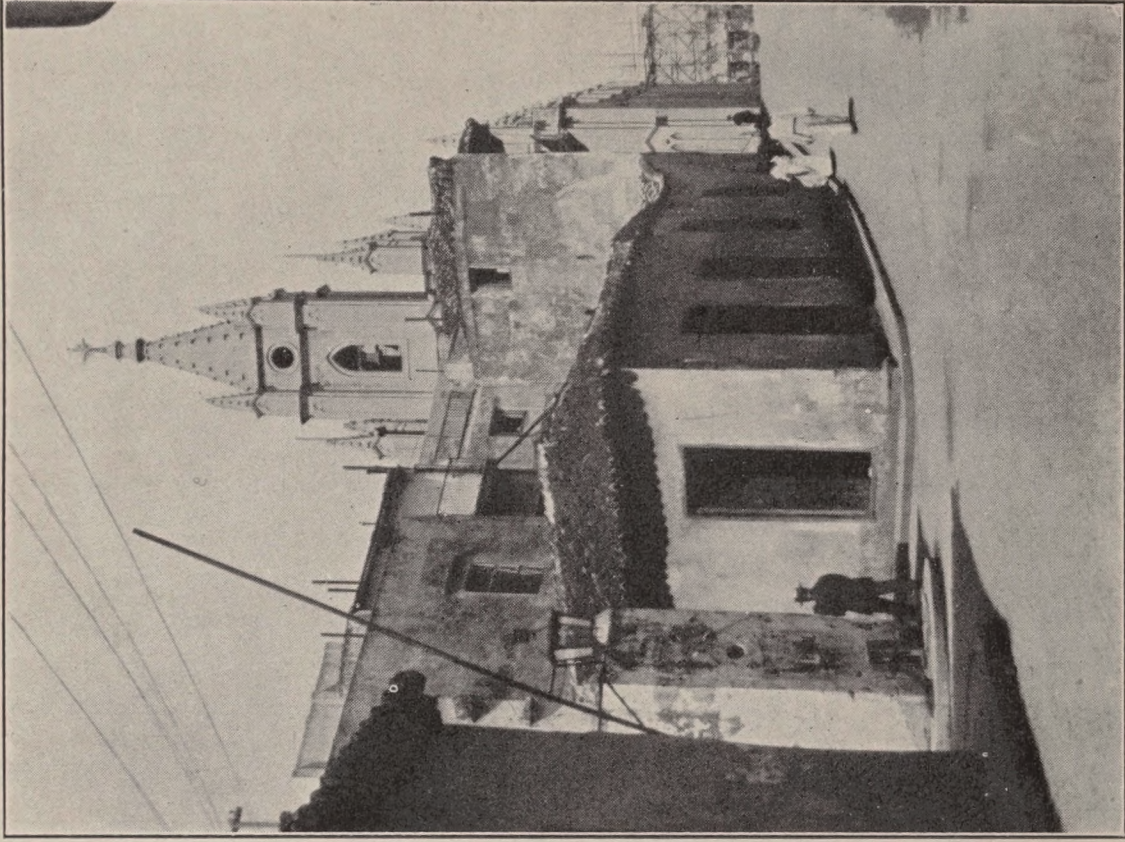
"Blow me fer a bloomin' Dutchman, if I ain't glad ter see ye," declared Tom as the boys sprang onto the yacht and danced and capered about. "'Ow's the bloomin' Hindu chap what chopped away the sail in that there squall? Comin' erlong o' ye this cruise, hey? Well, I'll be blowed!"

Everything was satisfactory aboard the yawl and with orders to Tom to get the luggage and stores transferred from the "Guanica," Captain Perkins hailed a waiting "coché," or cab, and the party rattled off over the cobbled docks towards the center of the town.

Strange and foreign-looking as Havana had appeared from the ship, the boys found it even more novel and picturesque as they drove through the streets. The narrow thoroughfares, bordered with ancient buildings, decorated with Moorish tiles, the



The ornate club buildings about the plaza.



Parts of the town looked like bits of old Spain.

glimpses of flower-filled patios, the iron-grilled windows and the brilliant colors of stuccoed walls, all added to the Oriental effect, and the boys could scarcely believe they were still in America.

Presently they entered the Calle O'Reilly, with its numerous stores and shops, its odd, brightly-painted canopies stretched from side to side overhead and its ceaseless close-packed stream of traffic.

Then they emerged upon a small square with a beautiful marble statue in the center, trotted through a wide street, bordered by immense buildings, each occupying an entire square, and drew up at one side of the great central plaza known as "Parque Central."

The boys scarcely knew which to admire the most, the flaming poinciana trees, graceful palms and splendid statues of the park or the ornate, beautiful club buildings and palatial hotels which surrounded it. In the cool shade of a colonnade, bordering the sidewalk, they ate breakfast in an open-air restaurant while watching the passing crowds and innumerable automobiles and carriages.

"Now for a sight-seeing trip," exclaimed Captain Perkins when the breakfast of delicious native dishes was over. "Pile into the coché, lads. No use a-walking when ye can drive, is my motto. Cabs are the cheapest things in this town. Ten cents for the first and five cents for the other pas-

sengers. I reckon at that rate anyone can afford to ride."

Down through the wide Prado, with its central parklets, they drove to the Malecon and the blue strip of sea stretching between the Punta fort and gray Morro on the further shore. Thence to the wonderful botanic gardens; out to the Colon ceme-



tery and the monument to the victims of the "Maine" disaster, and then back to Colon Park and the Prado again.

At every turn the boys found something to admire and interest. The strange Belen bridge across a street, the hoary old cathedral, the remnants of the once great city wall, the beautiful churches, the Plaza de Armas and the palace were all visited in turn, and at each Captain Perkins gave the boys a short account of its historical interest, for he had at one time lived in Havana and knew every nook and corner of the Cuban capital.

The boys were highly amused when they caught sight of a tiny donkey dozing between the shafts of a rude cart bearing a huge barrel, which Captain Perkins told them was a Cuban watering cart.

"Relic of old times," he added. "Automobile street sprinklers are the only kind that suit the



The Prado with its central parklets.

Cubans nowadays; and as for fire engines, New York hasn't anything on Havana."

"The cleanliness of the town impresses me the most," Mr. Rogers remarked. "I had no idea that so large a city in the tropics could be so spotless."

"One of the cleanest cities in the world," declared Captain Perkins, "and the second healthiest. Porto Rico's the only place that beats it for that."

"Why, our geographies said Cuba and Porto Rico were unhealthy and that yellow fever was common," exclaimed Paul.

"So they were—before the Yankees cleaned them up," the captain explained. "The reputation they got in the old days dies hard."

Mr. Rogers and the boys were delighted at the quaint, picturesque vistas which their guide pointed out in the older parts of the city, and Mr. Rogers declared that the "Loma del Angel," a street scarcely ten feet in width, the prickly spire of the Church of the Angels above it and the aged, mellowed buildings of the neighborhood might well be bits transported bodily from old Spain or Morocco.

Before noon the heat became rather oppressive, and although the boys were loath to abandon their sightseeing, they followed Captain Perkins' advice and boarded the "Guanica." In the afternoon the

party went across the bay and, landing under Cabañas heights, made a tour of the ancient fortress and Morro Castle.

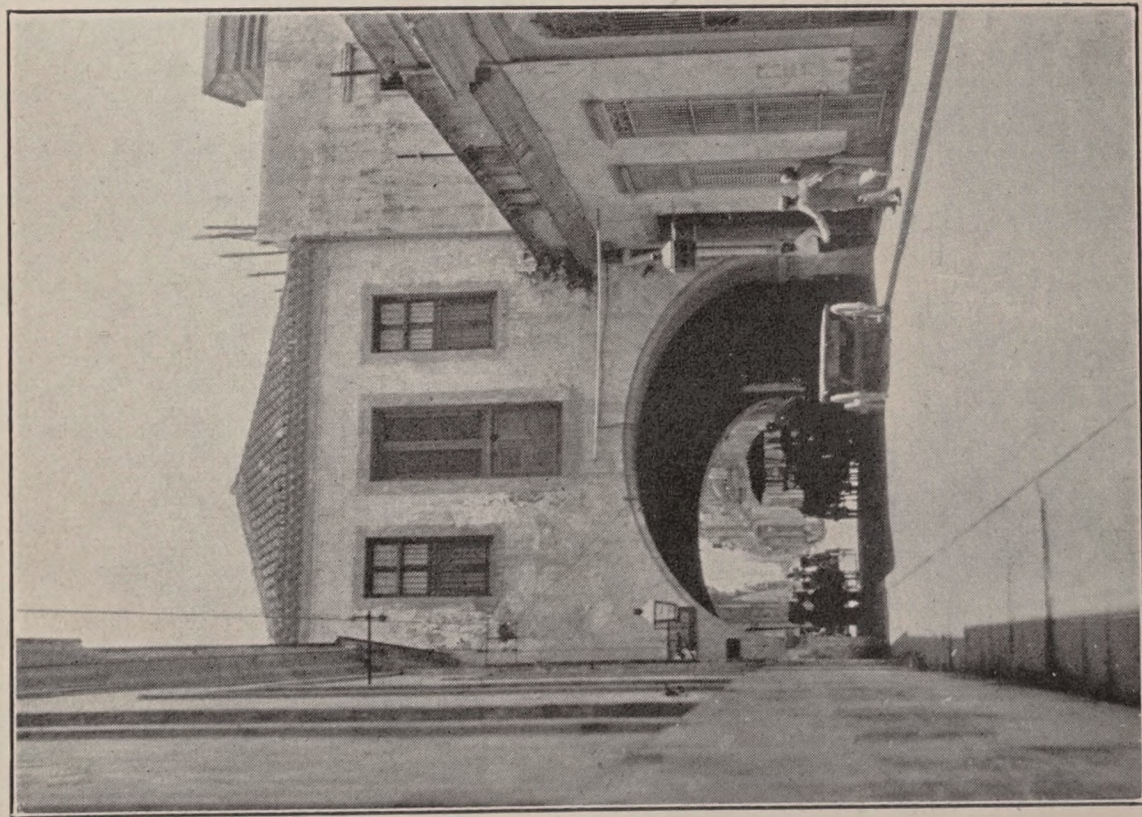
As they toiled up the steep slope the captain explained that while Cabañas was built as a fortress, it had never been attacked and had always served as a prison, especially during the numerous revolutions, when countless Cuban patriots had been tortured and executed within its walls. Near the entrance he turned to the right and showed the boys the famous "Laurel Ditch," where the prisoners were formerly shot, and the boys plainly saw the line of bullet marks which stretched for nearly one hundred feet along the wall, a grim memento of Spanish rule known as the "Dead Line."

From the water Cabañas had not impressed the boys as very large, but once within its walls they were amazed at its stupendous size.

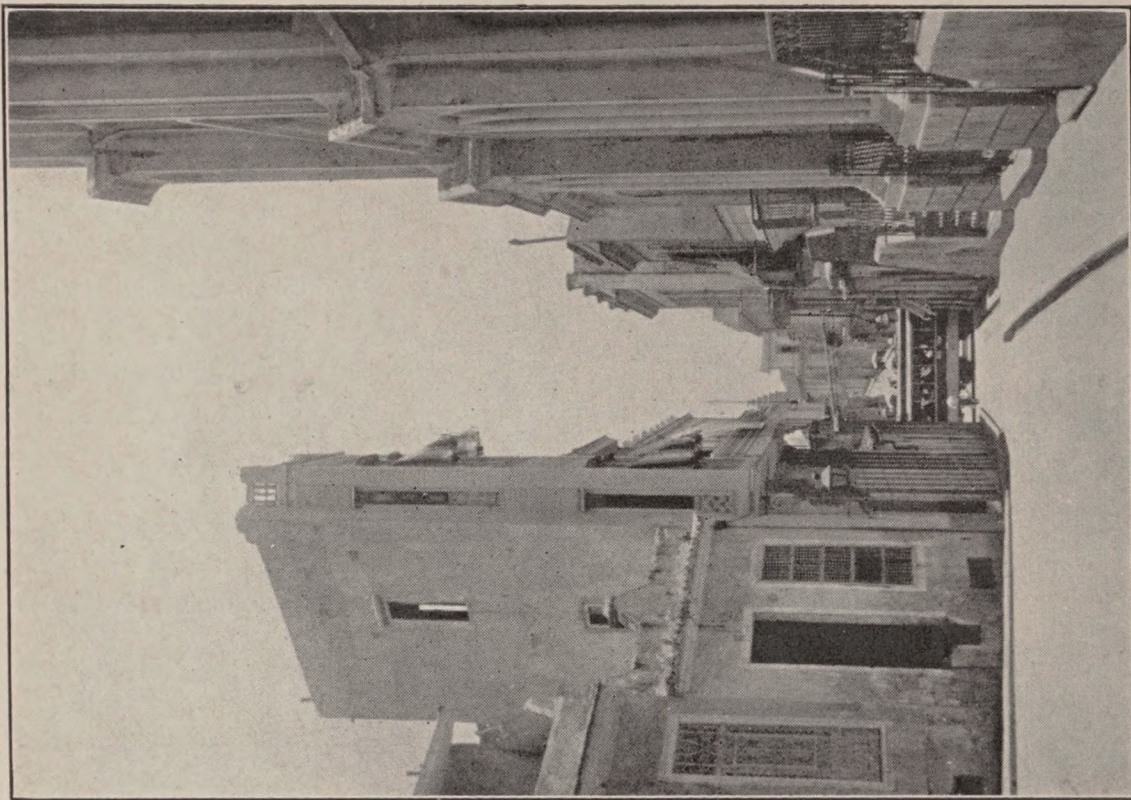
"It's a mile long and 1,000 feet wide," Captain Perkins assured them. "It cost the old dons a pretty penny, something over fourteen million dollars, they say; took eleven years to build it."

The boys could easily believe this as they wandered through the innumerable dungeons, secret chambers and underground passages and along the broad ramparts with their antique cannon still in place.

From Cabañas a short walk to the north led the



The strange bridge across a street.



The Loma del Angel scarce ten feet in width.

party to Morro, which they found far more interesting than Cabañas.

"Doesn't it look old!" exclaimed Harry as the boys crossed the ancient drawbridge across the great moat surrounding the castle on the land side.

"It's like stepping back to the middle ages," agreed Mr. Rogers.

"It's old, all right," said Captain Perkins. "Built in 1597 and copied after an old Moorish fort at Lisbon, I believe; but 'tain't half as old looking as the Santiago Morro or the Morro at San Juan."

"Why, I didn't know there were so many Morros," said Paul. "Why are they all named that?"

"'Morro' in Spanish means a castle on a height, 'specially one built in Moorish fashion, and there's Morros in pretty near every Spanish country," replied the captain.

The prison cells directly above the water, the stone chute, through which bodies of prisoners were formerly slid into the sea to become the food of waiting sharks, and the batteries of cannon were all fascinating to the two boys.

"You said Cuba had been attacked by pirates," remarked Paul as they stood by one of the immensely thick ramparts gazing across the narrow strait towards Havana. "I shouldn't think any ship could ever get into the harbor between these forts."

"Bless your heart," laughed the captain, "pirates weren't such fools as to try that game. No, sir-r-e-e; they left Havana alone after Morro was built and paid their compliments to other cities. Morro has never been attacked but once—'til we Yankees came along. That was back in 1762, when the Britishers captured it and turned the guns on the town; but they couldn't hold it more than a year, and it cost 'em a heap more in money and lives than 'twas worth."

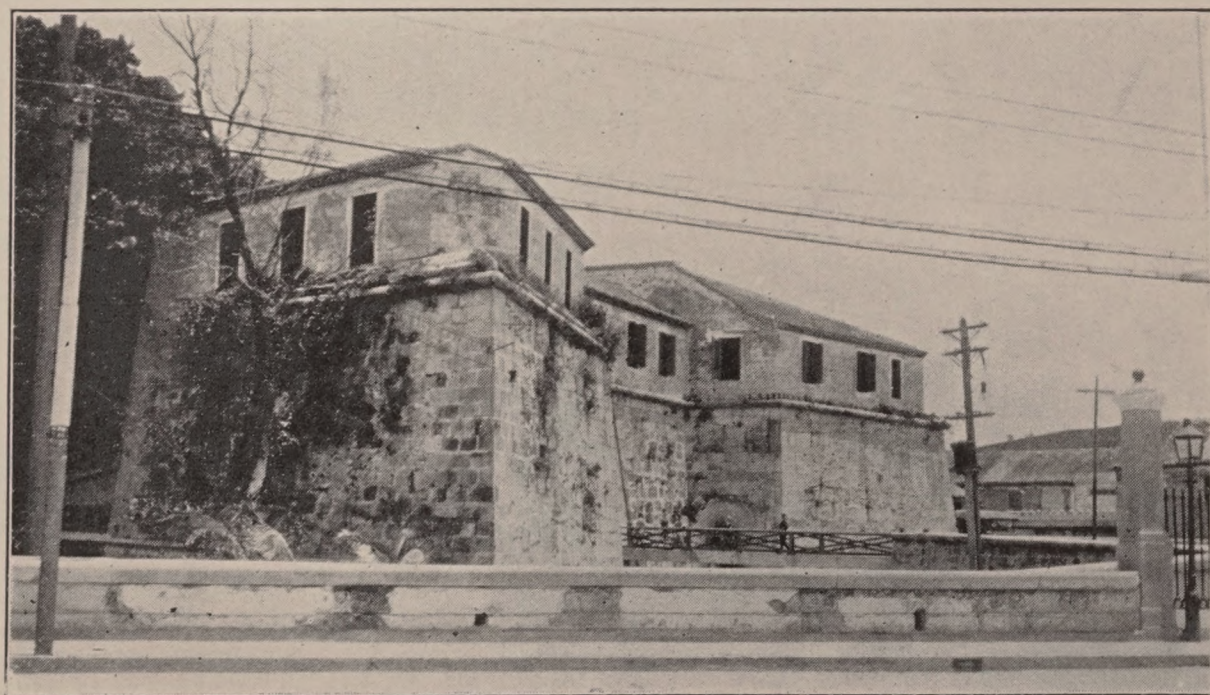
"See that little fort across the bay, 'longside the docks?" he continued. "That's the oldest thing in Havana. The Fuerza, or 'fort,' it's called. Begun in 1528 and finished in 1538 by old De Soto just before he started off to Florida. That old pile of rock's seen many a pirate. It's the place where all the plate and bullion used to be stowed away, waiting for ships to Spain. But nary a buccaneer ever took it, though they tried often enough."

The party returned to the town late in the afternoon, dined at the Miramar, at the foot of the Prado, and spent the evening driving and strolling about the parks and Malecon.

The "Guanica" had unloaded her cargo for Havana by the time the boys reached her that night and as Captain Sanders was to leave for Cienfuegos early the next morning, they bade him good-bye and



A wide street bordered by immense buildings.



“That’s the oldest thing in Havana; the Fuerza it’s called.”

boarded the "Cormorant," which was now moored in mid-harbor for the sake of the cool breeze.

It seemed very homelike once more to take up their old quarters on the yacht, but the next morning, when the boys looked for the "Guanica" and found her gone they felt a bit as if they'd parted from an old friend. Captain Perkins had some business to attend to at Matanzas and invited Mr. Rogers and the boys to accompany him on the trip.

"It'll give ye a glimpse of the country," he said, "and ye'll find plenty to interest ye 'twixt the caves and all."

"What a magnificent station!" exclaimed Harry as the party drew up before the big Central Station, with its lofty twin towers.

"One of the Yankee improvements," remarked the captain. "Wait till ye get inside, lads."

The splendidly equipped station, with its restaurants, glass-roofed platforms, tiled walls and numerous tracks filled with waiting trains of Pullman cars and coaches, was a revelation to the boys, who had never dreamed that such a thoroughly modern terminal could be found in the West Indies. But all this interested them far less than a tiny, quaint locomotive, which stood within a railing near one end of the platform. An inscribed plate furnished the information that this was the first locomotive used in Cuba, and one of the first to be operated in

America, for the United Railways of Havana were opened in 1837, while many of the cities in the United States were still dependent upon the stage coach and post chaise.

“That’s the best illustration of progress I’ve seen for a long time,” remarked Mr. Rogers as the party passed through the gates to board the waiting train. “Just to compare that diminutive machine with these big Mogul engines is an object lesson worth while.”

As the train rumbled through the extensive freight yards and along mile after mile of docks packed with shipping and teeming with industry, the boys were more and more impressed with the size and business of Havana.

Captain Perkins found an old friend aboard the train, a Cuban gentleman, whom he introduced to Mr. Rogers and the boys. When he found that the boys were interested in the history of the island, the pirates and days of adventure, he related many stories of Cuba’s past, which the boys found most fascinating and instructive.

“Cuba, and especially Havana, was the object of attacks by pirates from the earliest days,” he said in reply to a question from Paul. “In fact,” he continued, “the early history of the island is practically nothing but a record of pillage by freebooters from England, France and Holland.

Although the 'Fuerza' and 'Punta' were commenced in 1528, yet the fortifications were not completed for nearly a century, and meanwhile the city was totally destroyed by the French in 1538 and again in 1554. Sir Francis Drake attacked Havana in 1585 and 1592, and the Dutch buccaneers arrived in 1628. It was not until the completion of the city walls in 1665 that the city was able to resist the piratical forays. It's a pity you are not going to visit Santiago. The Morro is worth seeing and historically the town is very interesting."

"Was Santiago ever sacked by pirates?" asked Harry.

"As often as Havana," replied Señor Martinez. "Until 1608 Santiago was the Cuban capital, and vast quantities of treasure were kept there. In 1553 French buccaneers captured the town, held it for a month and only withdrew when the inhabitants paid a ransom of \$80,000."

"Do you think there is any buried treasure in Cuba?" asked Paul.

"It's hardly probable," replied the Cuban with a smile. "That is, pirates' treasure," he added. "No doubt the inhabitants often buried or secreted their valuables when attacked by freebooters or during times of war and doubtless many who lost their lives carried the secret of the hiding places with them to the grave. Even during the last strug-

gle for freedom much treasure was thus hidden and from time to time such hoards are recovered. If I wished to search for treasure in Cuba I should look



in the neighborhood of Sancti Spiritus or Camaguey, in the interior. They suffered more from pirates than the coast towns."

"Isn't that strange?" remarked Harry. "I

never knew pirates attacked inland cities."

"They attacked anything they could reach," replied their friend. "Even the hardships of an overland trip to Panama did not deter them, and it was comparatively easy for them to reach the interior towns of Cuba. Sancti Spiritus was pillaged in 1667 and again in 1719, and Camaguey was looted in 1668. On that occasion the pirates shut all the people in the churches, where they tortured them daily and starved them in order to compel them to divulge the hiding places of their riches. Finally, having secured everything of value, they butchered most of the inhabitants, left the others to die of starvation locked in their church prisons and departed



Cabañas where prisoners were formerly shot.



Morro's batteries of ancient cannon.

for the coast with hundreds of cattle and many prisoners. These captives were compelled to kill and dress the cattle, and were then put to the sword. You may sometimes hear Camaguey mentioned as Puerto Principe, which means 'Prince's Port,' and seems an odd name for an inland town. Originally the town was situated on the coast and was moved inland to avoid the attacks of pirates; but the change proved of no avail against the attack by Morgan, of which I have just told you."

"Why, Morgan seems to have been everywhere," exclaimed Paul. "You know we're going to follow 'in his wake,' as Captain Perkins puts it."

"If you follow his wake you'll have to visit nearly every spot around the Spanish Main," laughingly remarked Señor Martinez. "But he left a broad and bloody trail, and you'll have no difficulty in following it. Well, 'adios,' boys. I change here."

Gathering his luggage and bidding everyone good-bye, he hurried from the train as it stopped at the little station of Aguacate, with the huge Rosario Sugar Mill close at hand.

The scenery through which they had been passing was not at all interesting, and consisted mainly of mile after mile of waving sugar cane; but beyond Aguacate the country became hilly and attractive,

and the boys' attention was given up entirely to watching the ever-changing scenes through which they passed.

Presently the train roared through a deep cutting, with dense tropical growths on every side, and emerged upon a broad fertile plain covered with orange orchards.

"See that big peak over yonder?" said Captain Perkins, pointing to a solitary mountain ahead. "That's the 'Pan de Matanzas,' as it's called, and right under it's the town."

"I'll have to leave ye to yourselves for a spell," remarked the captain when they stepped from the train at Matanzas. "If ye wait 'til I'm through you won't have time to see the sights, and there's heaps to see. I'll get a 'cochero,' who speaks United States, and he'll take you around and have ye back in time for the train this afternoon."

Matanzas itself Mr. Rogers and the boys found very interesting. They drove through the portion known as "Versailles," with its beautiful marble houses, traveled out the Paseo to Fort San Severino and were amused at their guide's description of the "immortal mule," which was the only thing killed by Sampson's guns in 1898, and then, crossing the Yumuri over the Concordia bridge, entered the "Old Town." From here they crossed the San Juan river over Belen Bridge, admired the palatial pri-

vate residences of the wealthy Matanzans and after lunch headed for the Yumuri Valley.

"I don't wonder they call it the 'Vale of Paradise,'" remarked Mr. Rogers, as from a hilltop they looked upon the deep basin-like valley inclosed in verdure-clad hills and with the silvery stream winding through its center.

"It's certainly beautiful," agreed Paul.

"And such quantities of royal palms," added Harry. "I thought we saw lots of palms last winter, but there are more in this one valley than we saw in all those other islands."



They next visited the wonderful Bellamar Caves, wandered through their electric lighted interior and drove back to town just in time for the return train.

"You could stop in Havana a week and not see half the sights," remarked Captain Perkins as the launch carried them towards the yacht in the cool of the evening. "And as for Cuba," he continued, "ye'd need months to see it all. Heaps of folks think they can see Cuba in a couple of days, but, Lor', it's nigh a thousand miles long and something different every mile."

"I'd like to see it all," remarked Paul. "But I suppose we won't have time to stop any longer."

"We've many other places to go yet," replied

the captain. "Ye'll find plenty o' more interesting spots, 'specially as we're a-looking for treasure, not sight-seeing. I reckon we'd better be leaving tomorrow morning," he added; "everything's all ready and ye've seen most of the sights."

"Just as you say," said Mr. Rogers.

"Hurrah for the cruise!" cried the boys in unison.



A tiny donkey dozing between the shafts of a rude cart.



The Central Station with its twin towers.

CHAPTER IV

PLANS AND STORIES

“WHERE do we go next?” asked Paul, as they dined on the afterdeck of the “Cormorant” that evening.

“I reckon it’ll be Puerto Plata, over in San Domingo,” replied the captain. “I’d calculated to cruise about Haiti and rummage over Tortuga and Gonaive a bit afore sailing for San Domingo. Tortuga used to be the great stamping ground of the pirates, and I reckon there’s treasure there a-plenty—if we could find the right spot. It’s a good lump of an island, though, ’bout twenty miles long and wooded.”

“Why can’t we go there, then?” asked Harry.

“Just now there’s a bit of a mixup a-going on in Haiti,” replied the captain, “and ’tain’t particular healthy for white folks to go a-nosing about in the black republic when there’s a revolution being held.”

“Do you think they would actually attack us?” asked Paul.

Captain Perkins laughed. “Lor’ bless your

heart," he cried. "I don't expect they'd actually shoot us or shove us into prison; but laws are pretty lax in Haiti when it comes to foreigners, and when they get scrappin' and no one's a-top of the heap they're not likely to respect property rights. If they took it into their woolly heads to think we were filibusters and grabbed the 'Cormorant,' we'd be in a pretty fix."

"It's a pity, anyway," remarked Paul. "But tell us more about Tortuga, Captain Frank."

"I can't tell ye a great lot," the captain replied, "excepting that the buccaneers held the place for pretty near fifty years and laughed at the King of Spain and all his ships when they tried to drive 'em out. They had gardens and villages, raised cattle and dried beef; for that matter they got the name of buccaneers from that same jerked beef what's called 'bucan' by the Spaniards. After a while pirating got too risky and some of the chaps gave up the sea and settled down to an honest life. Others made enough to live decent on and migrated to other parts. Still others got killed or captured. Plenty of the descendants of the old pirates still live on Tortuga and at Port de Paix, across the strait, but they're all as black outside as they used to be inside."

"Did Morgan ever live there?" asked Paul.

"I dunno about that," the captain answered.

“He used to stop there and ’twas a regular spot for him to careen his ships and load water and grub. I shouldn’t be a mite surprised if he cachéd a bit of treasure there himself.”

“Señor Martinez said we’d have to visit every spot on the Spanish Main if we followed his wake,” remarked Harry.

“Right he was,” chuckled the captain. “Old Harry Morgan didn’t let the grass grow under *his* feet. But there’s no use a-trying to follow everywhere he went. For example, there’s Jamaica. Old Morgan lived there and was governor of the island at one time, but he didn’t rob ships around those parts. No, sir; when he wasn’t holding up Cuba or Panama he was knocking about San Domingo or La Guayra or maybe Porto Bello and ’twixt times a-putting into little harbors and keys and a-hiding his loot.”

“You spoke of going to Puerto Plata,” said Mr. Rogers. “Was that one of the towns sacked by Morgan?”

“Not to my knowing,” replied the captain. “There’s a yarn about a treasure ship sunk off the harbor, and I thought ’twas worth looking after.” He winked at Mr. Rogers.

“I thought they were having a revolution in San Domingo,” remarked Harry. “Won’t it be just as risky to go there?”

The captain laughed heartily. "Lor' no, lad," he cried. "Don't make the mistake of mixing Haitiens and Dominicans. There isn't any resemblance between 'em, 'cepting both crowds are altogether too fond o' revoluting."

"Why, I thought it was all one island," exclaimed Paul. "And that the people were all black."

"Bless ye, no," declared the captain. "Haiti's a black republic, all right, providing ye admit it's a republic at all, but the Dominicans are mostly white, or least ways a bit 'tar-brushed,' as the saying is. Ye're right about it being all one island, lad; but it's a whopping big bit of land, and the two republics that occupy it don't have anything in common. The Haitiens don't have any use for whites, and they're a-going backwards all the time, whereas the Dominicans welcome foreigners with open arms almost, and the place is a-getting on towards civilization pretty fast. If it wasn't for the shenanigans they're always a-kicking up it'd be the most prosperous island in the whole bunch—it's the richest place in the Indies, naturally."

"Where do you plan to go from Puerto Plata?" asked Mr. Rogers.

"That depends a bit on what turns up," said Captain Frank. "You see," he added, "I've got a lot of yarns about treasure stowed away in my head, and I've got hold of an old map with crosses marked

on it where ships were sunk. Of course a lot of these are in deep water, but some of 'em may still be a-holding together where it's shallow, and it'll be some fun to look 'em up, even if we don't get any treasure. That's why I brought the diving outfit along. I've been down more'n once myself, and I reckon I can go again, and Tom tells me he used to dive some and can go down if I want; so that's all easy sailing. We're not pinned down to a regular route—'twouldn't be like a treasure-hunting cruise if we were. I reckon we'll just follow along here and yon where old Morgan went, and knock about from one spot to another, according to how things turn out. How'll that suit ye?" He clapped the boys heartily on their backs.

"I think that will be fine," declared Paul.

"It will be lots more fun than knowing where we're going beforehand," agreed Harry.

"I'd love to go down in a diving suit," remarked Paul after a moment's silence. "It must be wonderful to walk about at the bottom of the sea."

"Maybe I'll let ye, if I find a likely spot in shallow water," chuckled the captain. "Fact is, I kind of expected to let both of ye go down when I bought the suit. It'll be interesting and won't hurt ye a mite."

"That *will* be bully," cried Harry. "I sha'n't care whether we find treasure or not. Nothing

could be more interesting than to go to an old wreck in a diving suit."

Captain Frank laughed. "I'm a-going to show ye something that'll interest ye more than that," he declared.

"Do tell us what it is," begged Paul.

"No, sir-r-e-e. It's a surprise, unless ye guess it afore the time comes."

"Well, we'll have to let it go at that, I suppose," said Harry. "But won't you show us the map you spoke of?"

"And tell us some of the yarns about treasure?" added Paul.

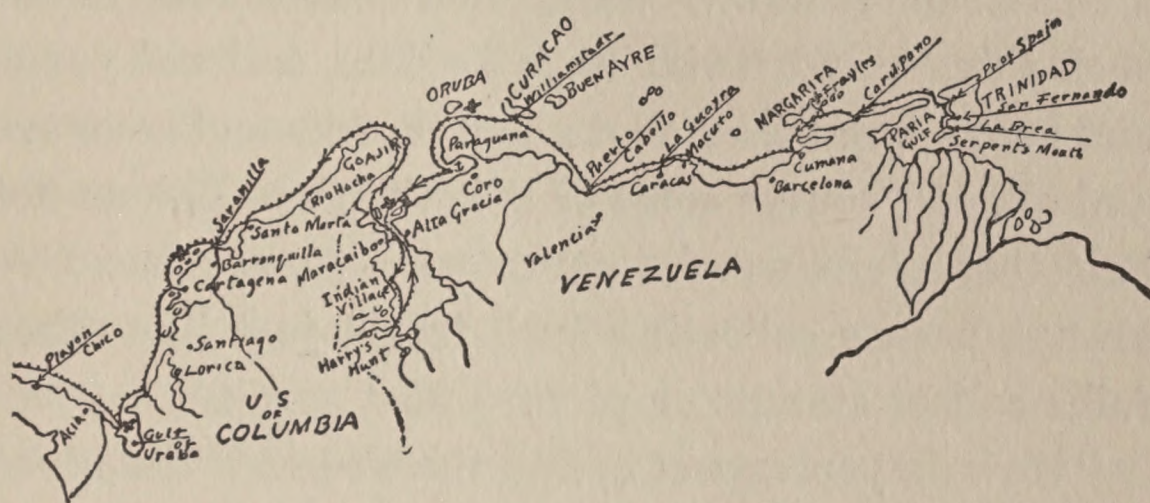
"Of course I will," cried the merry little man. "Come into the cabin, lads, and I'll get out the map and then I'll spin some of the yarns I've in mind."

In the cabin the captain brought out the map and spread it on the table. It proved to be a rough chart of the northern coast of South America, crudely made, but giving a fairly accurate outline of the shores and islands near the coast, and with crosses here and there.

"Each of these crosses is a wreck," explained the captain. "Those in red ink had treasure aboard. The first one I'm a-going to hunt up is this." He placed his finger on a red cross just off the northeast coast of Margarita Island.

"Here's another," he continued. He pointed to

a mark on the southern side of Oruba Island. "Here's a couple close together, 'longside of these islands in the Maracaibo Gulf," he said, "and here's still another among these reefs 'twixt Barranquilla and Cartagena. The last one of the lot's clear down here in the Gulf of Uraba."



“Why, if we visit all those we’ll have to sail all along the South American coast,” exclaimed Harry. “Won’t that be grand? I didn’t know we were going so far.”

“Oh, we may run across so much treasure we’ll have to cut for home after locating the first wreck,” laughed the captain.

“Where on earth did you get this map?” asked Paul.

“Been accumulating evidence, as a lawyer chap’d say, ever since I can recollect, and I’ve always had a hankering after going on a treasure hunt. I copied the most of the chart from an old map I

found when poking about down in Colon one time. 'Twas just after the big fire, and papers and odds and ends was blowing about the streets, and I picked up a map that was half burnt, and just out of curiosity I copied her off. A lot of the wrecks were marked on it, and every time I've heard of another I've marked it down. Sailormen hear a heap about such things, and 'twixt native pilots, sailors' yarns and books I've heard a lot about wrecks and treasure and all. Of course some of it isn't true—like as not half these 'ere wrecks never were there; but I've always been a-collecting such trash, just like other folks collect stamps or picture post cards."

"How do you expect to find the wrecks?" inquired Mr. Rogers. "The chart is not sufficiently accurate to serve as a guide, I imagine."

"No, sir," said the captain as he rolled up the chart, "I expect to find 'em by looking about. Water's so clear you can see bottom at six or seven fathoms in most spots, and I reckon a wreck'll show up pretty plain if we get close to it."

"Did you ever really know of anyone finding a wreck with treasure?" asked Paul.

"Lor', yes," answered the captain. "Come along on deck and I'll tell ye a few yarns that are true as gospel. It's too all fired hot down below here."

Far into the night the boys sat spellbound listening to Captain Perkins' yarns, many of which he

related from memory, while others he read from clippings, notes and entries in old log-books.

He told them of a friend who had commanded an expedition to the Bahamas on a search for wrecks. How the wreck had been found, the old cannon, bronze fittings and thousands of dollars' worth of bullion had been recovered and safely loaded on their own ship. How a sudden storm had wrecked the vessel and another wreck had been repaired and raised, rigged with the fittings of their own schooner and the treasure-trove had again been salvaged and placed in the hold of the reconstructed vessel. Finally, how, after days and weeks, the treasure-hunters had worked the old hull north to Cape Cod and when almost in sight of Boston and home the ancient timbers and bolts had given way to the strain and treasure and all had gone to the bottom, while the crew barely escaped with their lives.

"Wasn't that a dreadful shame," exclaimed Harry. "After all that work to be wrecked so near home. Didn't they ever recover anything?"

"Just a few old guns," replied the captain.

He then told another tale of a skipper who, having been wrecked on a West Indian islet, returned with the tale of a wrecked galleon which he had discovered while diving for shellfish. The castaway

gathered together a crew of his friends, secured a schooner and sailed away, to return months later, with a load of old copper and bronze which amply repaid him for the time and money spent.

"He kept his mouth shut," said Captain Perkins, "and not a man-Jack ever told a word about what they found or where the wreck was—but they found more than old brass, I'll wager. Every one of 'em's been a-living like bank presidents ever since."

"Do you really think they found treasure?" asked Paul. "How could they get it in without being seen?"

"I reckon it this way," said the captain. "I've always suspected they found bullion or maybe jewels. Then, like as not, they headed for some port in Mexico or South America, unloaded their treasure here and there and sailed home with the proceeds in good coin or drafts."

"Then there was another skipper," continued Captain Perkins, "name of Hastings, and hailing from Salem. He got hold of an old chart a good deal like that I showed you boys. He talked a lot of hard-headed old New Englanders into outfitting him and sailed away for a spot in the Caribbean. Searched all about but couldn't locate the wreck he was a-looking for, but he came across a bed o' pearl oysters. This was a sight better than nothing and the old chap turned pearler. One day one of the

divers sent up a basket of shell and the skipper noticed something a-sticking to the roots of one of the oysters. He scraped away the coral and weeds and let out a yell. That oyster was a-growing fast to a bar of silver bullion. To make a long story short, the skipper found he'd located a wreck just by chance, and afore a storm came up and made him slip his cable and clear out he salted down over fifteen ton of silver in his schooner's hold."

"Did he ever go back for more?" asked Harry.

"Sure he did, lad," chuckled the story-teller. "Hunted high and low and never located that wreck again. If he'd only been content with what he had he'd have been comfortable all his life, but he wanted more and afore he gave up he lost his ship in a hurricane and with it all he'd found; for he'd invested every cent of his share in fitting out a schooner of his own."

"Well, I don't see why everyone laughs so at treasure hunting," remarked Paul as the boys finally rose to retire. "If there's really sunken and buried treasure I don't see why we're not likely to find it, as long as others have."

"A great deal more has been lost in the search than was ever found," said Mr. Rogers. "You never hear much about the failures."

"True as a trivet," agreed the captain, and added: "Don't you lads think I'm in earnest about

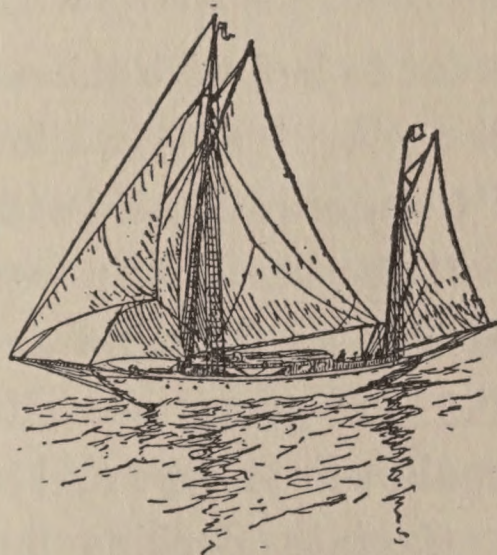
finding treasure-trove. I don't ever *really* expect to get a ha'-penny out of old wrecks or pirates' cachés, but it's a lot of fun thinking about it, and makes the cruise more interesting."

CHAPTER V

THE PIRATES' ISLAND

THE sun was just gilding the roof-tops of Havana, and the slopes of Cabañas heights were still bathed in deep shadows when the "Cormorant" passed out between the Morro and Punta and the boys felt that their treasure hunt had really commenced.

With every sail set the little yacht sailed rapidly eastward along the northern coast of Cuba and all day long the boys amused themselves by watching the island through their glasses. Captain Perkins pointed out the various ports. Matanzas, with its lofty "Pan," was first seen, and some thirty miles further east the captain called the boys' attention to Cardenas.



"Yonder's where Ensign Bagley and four of our men were killed during the war with Spain," he remarked. "First Yankees that lost their lives. See those white-and-red houses along the beach? That's

'Varadero.' Great summer resort of the Cuban folks."

Beyond Cardenas were numerous small, verdure-covered islands and keys which hid the main island and the captain informed the boys that on one of these islets, known as "Cayo Christo," the Cuban President and members of his cabinet had their summer homes.

Late in the afternoon they sighted Sagua la Grande, which Captain Frank said was the "farthest north" town in Cuba. The boys



went to bed with the coast line of Cuba dark against the starlit sky, while through the long night the "Cormorant" held steadily on her eastward course.

"Goodness, are we still off Cuba?" exclaimed Harry as he came on deck the next day and saw the dull-green shoreline stretching as far as eye could see to east and west.

Captain Perkins laughed. "Reckon ye haven't been a-studying the chart, lad," he said. "We're only a bit more'n halfway the length of the island. Ye'll wake up to-morrow morning and still see old Cuba a-stretching along to the s'uthard and ye'll go to bed to-morrow night with it still in sight."

"I never realized how long it was before," re-

plied Harry. "It doesn't look so very big on the maps."

The yacht was now passing near a continuous chain of islands and Paul remarked that the whole northern coast of Cuba seemed to be protected by keys.

"True enough," agreed the captain. "Back of the kays is good anchorage and all along the coast there's good harbors—though ye can't see the ports 'count of the islands. 'Place of a hundred harbors' Cuba's sometimes called. Those kays yonder are called the 'King's Gardens'—'Jardines del Rey' the Cubans call 'em; and mighty pretty places they be."

About noon Captain Perkins showed the boys the narrow inlet to Nuevitas harbor and explained that from here a railway ran to Camaguey. Beyond Nuevitas the coast was dim and indistinct, with numerous tiny towns at the heads of their little harbors, and the boys became quite tired of watching the shore.

The following morning they were off Gibara and in the soft morning light the boys had a good view of the ancient, bright-colored town on its crescent-shaped bay.

"Gibara was the first place old Columbus stopped in Cuba," said Captain Perkins. "Sailed into the bay in 1492. See those three big hills yonder? The one with the notch is called the 'Silla' or 'Saddle';

t'other one with the flat top's the 'Tabla' or 'Table,' and the third's the 'Pan' or 'Sugar Loaf.' You can't mistake 'em cause they're bare rock at the top and Columbus wrote about 'em in his log. I 'spect they haven't changed much since his times."

By noon they were off Nipe Bay, where the captain said there were many Americans and which he stated was being boomed by the United Fruit Com-



pany, and late in the afternoon Baracoa was left astern.

"That's the last we'll see of Cuba this trip," remarked Captain Perkins. "By midnight we'll be a-crossing the Wind'ard Passage and to-morrow, if the wind holds, ye'll wake up to see Haiti to loo'ard."

Crossing the channel between Cape Maysi, Cuba and Haiti there was quite a heavy sea and the "Cormorant" jumped and bobbed about tremendously, but the boys were fine sailors and slept undisturbed.

When they went on deck the next morning they saw land close at hand, but very different in appearance from the northern shores of Cuba to which they had become accustomed. Instead of the low, indistinct coast, along which they had sailed for the past three days, they now saw lofty mountains

purple against the sky, while in the foreground were heavily wooded hills.

"That looks more like the islands we saw last winter," remarked Paul.

"Is that Haiti?" asked Harry.

"Them mountains is Haiti," replied Tom, who was at the wheel. "This 'ere lump o' land's Tortuga." He jerked his thumb at the wooded shores a mile distant.

"That's where the buccaneers used to live," exclaimed Paul. "Captain Perkins was telling us about them."

"Were you ever in Haiti?" asked Harry.

"I wuz quartermaster on a Dutch boat what sailed a'tween New York an' South Ameriky an' stopped along o' the Haiti ports," replied the sailor. "An' a bloom-in' shame I call it, a-havin' that there fine bit o' land a-goin' to wrack an' ruin. 'Black republic' they calls it. Blow me, but hit's a black crazy-house ef ye arsk me. Why, Lor' love ye, I've a-seen men an' wimmen, black as yer 'at an' all togged out in 'igh 'ats and lace an' satin shoes, a-pickin' o' their way atwixt puddles o' filth an' heaps o' rottin' garbage in the main street o' the capital."



"Is it really as bad as all that?" asked Harry.

Tom spat contemptuously into the sea. "Bad!" he exclaimed. "That ain't nothin' compared o' some parts. Why, back in the bush them Haitiens is savages—a-dancin' about, naked as the Lord made 'em, an' a-kowtowin' to Voodoo an' Obeah like as if they wuz in the middle o' Africa. I ain't never been in the bush myself, but I've heard as 'ow some o' them blacks is actooally cannibals."

"Oh, come, Tom, we can't swallow that, you know," laughed Paul.

"Tom isn't so far off his course," said Captain Perkins, who had approached unnoticed. "'Tain't likely there's any cannibals in Haiti now, but not so long back there were. There's plenty of Voodoo and Obeah dances a-going on and the less said about the carryin's-on the better. Port au Prince and the big towns are not so bad—plenty of good buildings and some improvements, but there isn't any use a-talking, blacks can't govern 'emselves. When they ain't having a revolution they're a-stealing the public money. There's a-plenty of decent folks there, though—lots of schools and the country folks are mighty good farmers and raise a heap of crops."

"Did you know that Alexander Dumas was a Haitien?" asked Mr. Rogers.

"Why, no; I thought he was French," replied Paul in surprise.

"No. He was a Haitien," replied his father. "He

was born at Jeremie. A number of native Haitiens have made their mark in literature and the arts."

"Well, that's certainly strange," said Harry, "if the people are so backward and semi-savage."

"There's a great deal of good, aristocratic French blood in the people," replied Mr. Rogers, "and if they could only settle down and have a good government they would be prosperous and successful."

"Are there any towns along this coast?" asked Paul, who had been looking shoreward through his glasses. "I seem to see some houses ahead and some ships' masts in that little bay."

"That's Cape Haitien," said the captain. "'The Cape,' folks most generally call it. It's a fine place—or was once—and you can see a-plenty of fine statues, fountains and regular palaces standing about, but half tumbled-down and with dirty huts and lazy blacks a-lollin' about everywhere. It's kind of an interesting place, though. First fort in America was built there by Columbus and the 'Santa Maria' was wrecked on a reef in the bay."

"I never knew Columbus was wrecked," exclaimed Harry. "It's funny we never heard about it at school."

"There's a heap that ye don't learn in books," declared the captain. "Along of to-morrow morning we'll pass the spot where the first settlement in America was started."

"Will we be able to see it?" asked Paul.

"Nope. There isn't anything to see—even if ye went ashore. Just a few old stones and ruins. 'Isabella' Columbus called it. It didn't last long. Too unhealthy, and nowadays no one lives there."

In the afternoon the yacht passed a tiny settlement nestling at the foot of a broad, gently-sloping plain and with a towering precipitous hill rising sheer from the water near at hand.

"That's the first town in the Dominican Republic," Captain Perkins told the boys. "'Monte Christi,' it's called, but ye can't see the town proper—it's back in the hills. The port's just a-swarming with mosquitoes and nobody lives there, 'cepting a few blacks and working folks."

"What is the name of that big mountain with the sliced-off face all red and yellow?" asked Harry.

Captain Perkins laughed. "That's another Morro," he replied. "Fact; that's the name. Dunno why they call it that, though."

"Well, the Dominican Republic looks pretty dry and barren, I think," remarked Paul. "It doesn't look as if anything grew there."

"I agree with you, Paul," said Mr. Rogers, who was also scanning the coast.

"This 'ere's the worst of the island," explained Captain Perkins. "Wait a bit 'til we get along further and ye'll find it different altogether."

By noon the coast had assumed a very different appearance. Huge, green-clad mountains stretched inland as far as eye could see, and from the hills slopes rich with tropical foliage reached to the very water's edge.

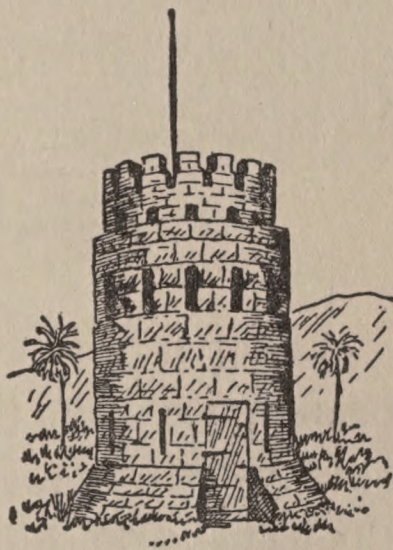
"I reckon ye don't think it looks so barren now," remarked Captain Perkins as the boys expressed their admiration at the luxuriance of the land.

"No, indeed," declared Paul. "It looks as if anything would grow there; but it doesn't seem to be cultivated much."

"Right as a trivet," cried the captain. "Anything will grow there—from beans and 'taters to bananas and cacao. There isn't much cultivated along this coast—no ports to ship from 'cepting Puerto Plata—but ye'll see plenty of growing crops afore we leave San Domingo astern. Yonder's where Isabella is." He pointed shoreward to a little bay.

The boys peered intently at the wooded cove as if striving to penetrate the tangled jungle and see the vine-covered ruins of the first settlement in the New World.

"Well, it's mighty interesting to know the Spaniards founded their first town there," remarked Harry, "even if we can't see it."



"Ye'll see plenty of things pretty nigh as old," said the captain. "Things that were built in Columbus' time. Old San Domingo's the most historical spot in America, I'll wager."

It was nearly sunset when the beautiful cloud-wreathed cone of Isabella la Torre was seen ahead and the evening shadows were already deep upon the mountain's slopes when the "Cormorant"



passed between the reefs which guard the harbor entrance to Puerto Plata and came to anchor in the beautiful, semicircular bay before the red-roofed town.

"That's the prettiest town we've seen in the tropics," exclaimed Paul, and the others fully agreed with him.

The party went ashore as soon as possible and landed at a long iron pier which extended outward for nearly a quarter of a mile from shore.

"Oh, look at those carts," cried Harry, as the boys walked up the dock.

The sight which had attracted him was really a strange one, for numerous carts and drays were



“That’s the prettiest town we’ve seen.”



A small boy astride a large bull.

standing beside the dock in water which reached almost to the horses' backs, and were being loaded with bundles, bales and boxes from lighters.

" 'Tis kind of queer at first sight," admitted Captain Perkins. "Ye see the water's so all-fired shallow the boats can't get close to shore and the carts just drive out to the boats."

The boys found the town well-kept, neat, and with smooth, fairly wide streets. They saw the hospital, several good hotels, some fine residences, and several large clubhouses, and were quite surprised to find the place ablaze with electric lights.



"San Domingo's not so backward," remarked the captain. " 'Most every town has electric lights and they're all connected by telephone and telegraph."

The pretty central plaza attracted the party and they sat for some time on the benches beneath the palms and mahogany trees listening to the music of the military band. Suddenly Paul caught sight of a small boy sitting astride of a big, tawny bull trotting along the street.

"Just look at that," he exclaimed. "Imagine riding a bull."

"Lor' bless ye," cried the captain. "They're the

regular riding critters in the republic. Everyone rides 'em, including women and girls. Kind of jolty, but sure-footed as goats. They can cover a heap of country in a day too—no 'slow-plodding oxen' about San Domingan cattle. Bred for riding and can move right lively. Ye'll see more of 'em round to the other towns."

The captain pointed out the railway station as they walked along on their return to the dock and explained that Puerto Plata was of importance as the port, or outlet, of the rich interior district known as the "Cibao."

"Quantities of coffee and cacao come from there," he remarked. "Santiago and Moca are the big Cibao towns. The railway runs to Santiago from Puerto Plata and it's *some* road, I tell ye. Forty-two miles long and climbs over a mountain a couple of thousand feet high in the first fifteen miles, using a cog-wheel and rack to do it. Runs straight through a mountain-top by a tunnel and bobs out on t'other side at Santiago. Kind of international road as ye might say, too. Money furnished by Dutchmen, started by the Belgians, bridges built by Britishers, cars and engines American, owned by Dominicans and run by Yankees."

"You seem to know all about the country," remarked Mr. Rogers. "Did you ever live in Santo Domingo?"

“Well, I’ve been knocking ’round the islands and South America ever since I was a little chap,” replied Captain Frank. “More’n fifty year I’ve been sailing and most of the time on the Spanish Main. A man’ll pick up a heap of knowledge about places he’s a-visiting in fifty year. But I didn’t get it all just sailing about. Learned Spanish when I was a young feller and now and again I’d take a spell ashore as the agent of the owners. Lived off and on in most of the islands, but never really set down to stay ’til I married and took over the place in Barbados.”

The next morning the captain announced that he was going to hunt up some facts about the wreck which was reputed to be somewhere in the vicinity of the port, and the boys and Mr. Rogers amused themselves during his absence by taking a long drive through the nearby country.

Captain Perkins returned early.

“Well, well,” he exclaimed. “What do you think, boys?” He chuckled as if at a good joke.

“Did you find anything about the wreck?” cried Harry. “I’ll bet you did.”

“O’ course I did,” declared the captain. “Remember that fellow Hastings that I was a-telling you boys about—the skipper who ran across a load of silver when a-fishing for pearls? Well, that old wreck he found was the same one I was a-trying to

run down." He laughed heartily as if he considered it the funniest thought in the world.

"Well, then there isn't any hope for us here," remarked Harry in a disappointed tone. "That crosses one chance off our list."



"May I ask how you ferret out such things?" asked Mr. Rogers. "You appear to be a born detective."

"That was dead simple," chuckled the captain. "Hunted up an old chap that I knew here years ago. Lives down the coast a bit and has a plantation. Used to be a ship's carpenter and an A-No. 1 'chips' if I do say it myself. Reckoned he'd know all the yarns there was hereabouts, seeing as how he was always kind of keen on buried treasure yarns himself. Fact is, some say he wasn't too particular as to how he got *his* money. Heard yarns about his being a smuggler and gun-runner more than once. Old Sam knew about the wreck yarn all right and he's cock-sure old Hastings struck it. Says Hastings put in here and everyone about the place knows he found that wreck. Dunno as old Sam's right, but he never heard of another wreck in these parts with treasure aboard and I don't calculate it's worth while poking about on our own hook. How about it, lads?"

"I quite agree that it would be wasting time,"

replied Mr. Rogers, striving to conceal a smile at the captain's knowing winks.

"I say let's hurry up and get down to where you know there are wrecks," declared Harry.

"That's what I say, too," chimed in Paul.

Accordingly the yacht's anchor was hoisted and under power of her motor she soon left the landlocked harbor and pretty town behind and, passing the ancient Spanish fort and brilliant yellow lighthouse on the seaward promontory, headed eastward.

Only a vast expanse of luxuriant green, backed by lofty, forest-covered mountains stretching in range after range could be seen as they sailed along the coast, and when darkness fell the land still loomed against the sky to leeward.

When the two boys awoke the following morning they were surprised at the absence of motion of the yacht.

"I do believe we've stopped," exclaimed Harry. "I wonder what's happened."

He ran to the port and looked out.

"Yes," he cried. "I can see land. The water's as smooth as glass and we're not moving. I think we must be in a harbor."

The boys were soon dressed and hurried on deck. It was broad daylight, and Captain Perkins, who never seemed to sleep, was giving some orders to the men forward.

The boys looked about expecting to see a town close at hand, but none was visible. The "Cormorant" was anchored on a broad bay with land on either side—that to the north two or three miles distant and that to the south barely visible through



the morning mist rising from the water. To the east the water stretched unbroken to the horizon beneath the rising sun, and to the west it swept into a blurred haze which looked like land.

Close at hand, within a hundred yards of the "Cormorant," was a little verdure-clad island, a perfect gem with its setting of turquoise sea, snow-white coral beaches and rich green foliage.

"Well, well," cried Captain Perkins heartily as he caught sight of the boys. "How does that strike ye as a spot for buried treasure? Regular A-No. 1 spot for pirates to hang out in, hey?"

"It's the loveliest spot I've ever seen," declared Paul. "Wouldn't I just love to have a house and live there. Where are we, Captain Frank? Are we going to search for treasure here?"

Harry uttered a sudden exclamation. "Hurrah!" he shouted. "I know where we are. That's Trade Wind Key and we're in Samana Bay."

"Right as a trivet, lad," cried the captain.

“Yonder’s the exact spot that was drawed out on the pirate’s map you found down to St. Kitts. Thought I’d surprise ye. What do you say to a romp ashore a-looking up where the treasure was hid along of the ‘Spanish Capitaine’ as the chart put it?”

“Won’t that be bully!” exclaimed Paul.



“It will be almost as much fun as finding the treasure,” declared Harry.

“What is that will be so glorious?” asked Mr. Rogers, who now arrived on deck. “Have you located a treasure-laden wreck?”

“Oh, Uncle Charles——” Harry began, when he was interrupted by Captain Perkins.

“Hey, don’t tell him,” he exclaimed. “See if he’s smart as you be. Recognize anything around here, Rogers?”

Mr. Rogers glanced about, first to one side and then another, and finally fastened his gaze on the little island. He placed his glasses to his eyes and studied the shore for a moment.

“Somehow that little Key does look familiar,” he remarked. “But I’m quite sure I’ve never seen it before. I give up, Perkins.”

"Why, it's Trade Wind Key," shouted both boys.

"The place that's shown on Harry's map," added Paul.

"Why, to be sure," exclaimed Mr. Rogers. "You've found your treasure island at last, Harry."

The boys were crazy to get ashore and could scarcely wait to eat their breakfasts. Meanwhile the launch had been lowered, provisions had been placed aboard, and as soon as the meal was over the boys tumbled into the boat, followed by Mr. Rogers and the captain. A few moments later they sprang out upon the smooth white beach.

"Got your charts along with ye?" asked Captain Perkins as the party drew the launch onto the sand.

"I've mine," replied Harry. "I always carry it along wherever I go."

"All right then," said the captain. "We'll just follow along of the map as if we didn't know the treasure'd been found and see how near we can strike it by that old chart."

"Here's the beach," exclaimed Harry. "The wall and 'coral cliff' must be over to the left, beyond those woods."

The party found the tangled underbrush impenetrable, but discovered an opening and a sort of narrow trail close to the water.

"Look at these rocks," cried Paul as they started

to clamber up the ledge which jutted onto the beach. "They're just like regular steps."

"So they are," agreed Mr. Rogers. Stooping, he examined the rocks carefully. "They certainly appear to have been cut by hand," he said.

"Reckon ye're right," said Captain Perkins. "This 'ere kay used to be a regular stronghold of the pirates and ye'll find forts and cisterns and walls all cut out of the solid rock."

"This must be the wall," declared Harry as the path led them to a high point above the water and with a rocky breastwork or wall bordering the seaward side.

"It's cut out of rock just as the captain said," he continued. "Isn't it wonderful to



be right here among all these things left by the pirates and hunting for their cave by the aid of their own map?"

"That's the reef the map mentions," said Paul. He indicated a group of rocks a short distance from shore and upon which the sea was breaking. Harry and his cousin studied the map for a moment.

"'Beyond the wall one hundred paces until the point of the reef is in line with the cliff-side,'" Harry read from the chart.

Both boys at once started pacing, with the two men close behind them.

"Here's the spot," said Paul when one hundred long steps had been covered. "But the point of the reef isn't in line with the cliff-side."

"Let's have a look at the map," said Captain Perkins. "I'll soon tell ye what the trouble is."

He looked at the map carefully, compared it with the landmarks about and, placing a lead pencil upon the bit of paper, so that it crossed the point of the reef and the cliff, he drew a line.

"I reckon that old pirate chap didn't know much about map drawing," he announced. "His bearin's don't hitch up. We'll have to pace from yon wall in two or three directions and mark the distance and then walk 'round on the hundred-pace line and watch the p'int of the reef till it bears on the line of the cliff."

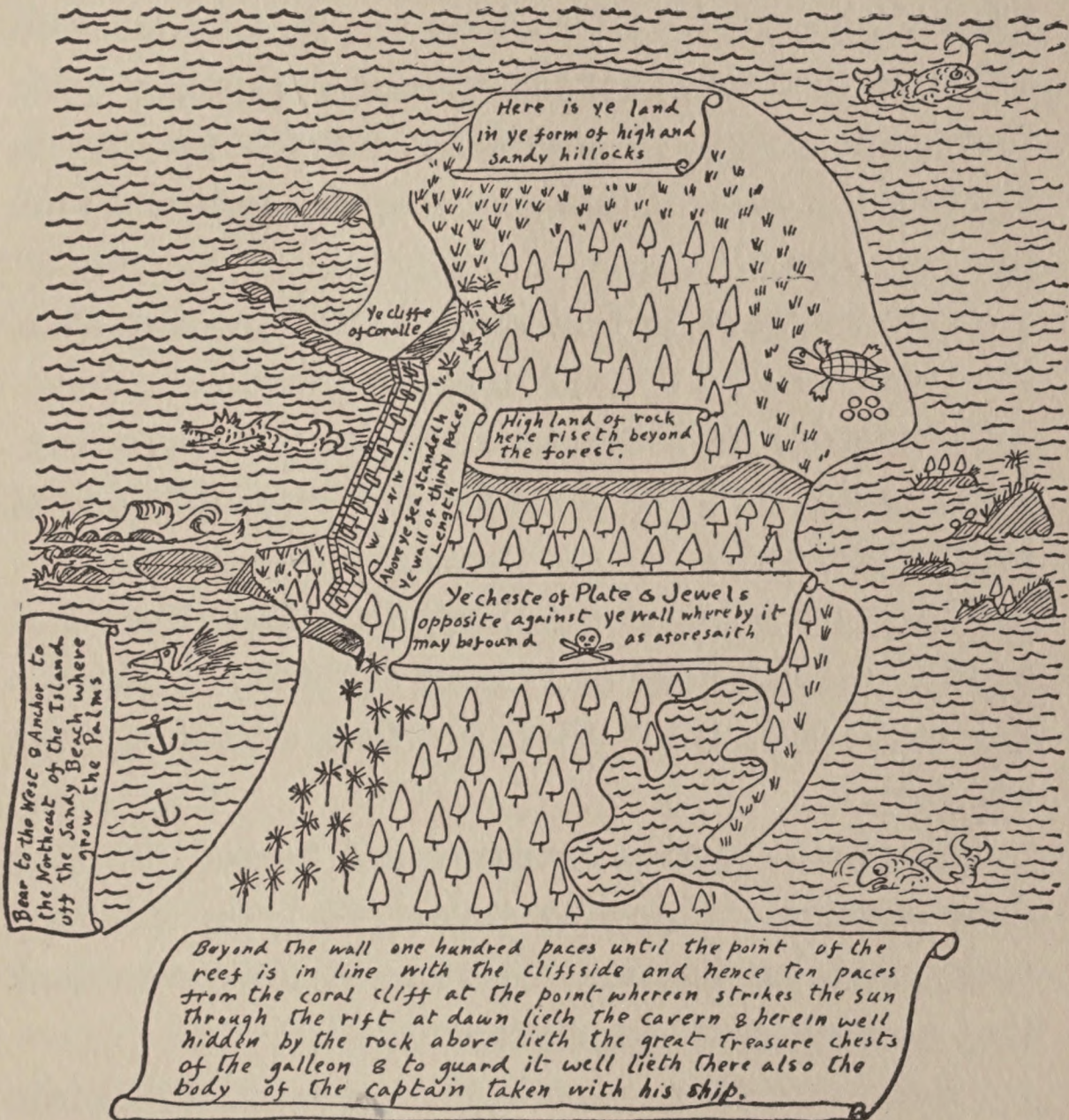
Following the captain's suggestion each of the four members of the little party paced off the distance from the wall in diverging lines, like the spokes of a wheel radiating from a hub.

"Ninety-eight, ninety-nine, one hundred," counted Harry and as he turned he uttered a glad shout. "Here 'tis," he cried.

The others hurried to him and looked at the reef.

"Well, well!" exclaimed Captain Perkins. "Ye struck it for sure, lad."

"There's no doubt of it," agreed Mr. Rogers.
 "The point of the reef is certainly right in line with the side of the cliff."



HARRY'S COPY OF THE PIRATE'S MAP

"What's the next move?" asked Paul.

"Ten paces from the coral cliff at the point whereon strikes the sun through the rift at dawn," Harry replied, reading the directions from his map.

"The ten paces are easy enough," remarked Paul.

"But I don't see how we can tell where the sun strikes at dawn—it's now nearly noon."

Captain Perkins burst into a roar of laughter. "Lor'," he cried. "You lads are just as keen on a-finding that cave as if the treasure was still a-lying there. I reckon ye won't have much trouble in locating the cave. I told ye a chap found it and took the loot away."

"But we want to find it by the map—just as if the treasure *was* there," explained Paul.

"Come on, we'll measure off the ten paces anyway," said Harry. He started forward, followed by the others.

Ten paces brought the party to a little bluff and as they caught sight of it Paul shouted: "There's the cave; see, right there in that corner by the big rock."

The party hurried forward and peered into the dark opening. Gleaming stalactites hung from the rocky roof, but the innermost recesses were so dark that nothing could be distinguished.

"Reckon we'll need a light," remarked Captain Perkins. "I'd ought to 'a' fetched a lantern along."

"Can't we make a torch?" asked Paul. "That would be ever so much more like treasure hunting."

"Course we can," said the captain. "Wait a bit an' I'll make a 'flameau' as we call it in the islan's."

He stepped into the brush and presently returned

with a bundle of twigs which he wrapped together with slender vines.

He touched a match to this and it at once burst into a crackling, resinous flame. Holding it aloft, he stepped into the cave, followed closely by the boys, and with Mr. Rogers bringing up the rear.

The cavern proved to be wide and high, the roof covered with stalactites and the floor rough with stalagmites, while in many places huge limestone columns joined roof and floor.

The party glanced about interestedly at the strange beauty revealed by the glare from the torch.

"Why, there's another cave!" cried Paul, pointing to a dark, irregular aperture in the further wall.

"Right ye are," exclaimed the captain. "Don't see anything in here, so we'll step into the nex' chamber."

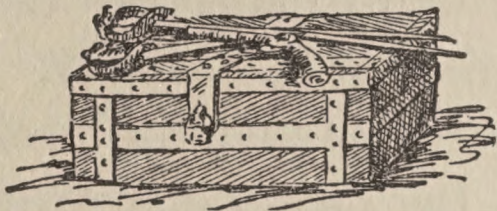
The others followed the torch-bearer through the opening and both boys cried out in amazement, for instead of another cavern they saw a square vault walled with blocks of stone, with an arched roof about eight feet above the floor on which they stood.

As the captain swung the torch slowly around and cast its beams into the further corners of the vault Harry gave a shout.

"There's a chest!" he cried, and dashed forward.

"Well, well, well!" cried the captain as the others hurried after him.

Instead of one there were two chests revealed by the torch light. One of wood, with fragments of rusty iron bands still clinging to the rotten planks; the other larger and of dull-colored metal. Both



chests were coated more or less with a thin layer of stalactite formation which had dropped from the roof above and about the covers and edges this showed signs of having been broken away.

“Reckon they’re the chests the treasure *was* in,” remarked the captain. “Mebbe that other chap left something behind. Better have a look inside, lads.”

Sticking his torch in a crevice of the stones, the captain tugged at the lid of the smaller box. It stuck slightly and then flew open and the boys peered eagerly within. The chest was filled with a mass of loose, dusty material and the captain lifted a handful of the mass and examined it closely. A few bits of gold thread and silver lace gleamed in its midst and the captain pointed these out to the wondering boys.

“All that’s left of a heap of old-time finery,” he remarked. “When that chest was a-hid here I reckon ’twas filled with as pretty a lot of clothes as ye’d see in many a day. Nothing left now but the bits of tinsel.”

“Perhaps there’s something underneath,” exclaimed Harry. “Let’s dump it all out and see.”

It was quite difficult to break the chest from its bed of dripstone; but all pulled and pushed together and at last the chest ripped from its place and tipped over with a little crash, spilling its contents over the stone floor.

Everyone sneezed as the fine, powdery dust rose in clouds, but presently it settled down and while Captain Perkins held the torch close the boys eagerly pawed over the rotten remains of ancient garments.

Suddenly Paul gave an exclamation.

“Here’s something,” he cried, and shook the dust from some solid object which he had found.

The others crowded close and examined the find. It proved to be an ornamental, brooch-like buckle of dull gold.

“You’re in luck,” said Mr. Rogers. “That’s certainly a fine souvenir of the pirates, Paul.”

Harry was still diligently searching and soon drew forth several small round objects from the bottom of the mass.

“They’re only buttons,” he said in a disappointed tone as he examined them.

“Right ye are,” agreed the captain. “But they’re solid gold and made from old Spanish coins. I reckon your souveeners are mighty interesting, too.”

The boys were greatly elated and not until the last trace of the decayed fragments had been carefully searched were they convinced that no other bits of metal were concealed within the mass.

"Perhaps there'll be something in that other chest," said Harry.

"We'll soon see," said Paul, and, aided by Mr. Rogers and the captain, they pried at the lid of the metal box. When at last the cover gave and creaked open on its rusty hinges and the boys peered inside they gave a startled cry and fell back. Within the chest and gleaming in the flickering torch light was a pile of human bones!

"Reckon that's the old 'captain' chap that the chart tells of," remarked Captain Perkins. "Nothing to be skeered about." He held the torch close and gingerly poked the skull with his finger.

The boys, now recovered from their momentary horror at the unexpected sight, looked curiously at the skeleton.

"Lor', but it does seem funny to be a-looking at that old chap after all these years," remarked the captain. "Look-a here," he continued. "Some of his clothes is still a-hanging on his bones." He pointed to rotten, crackled leather on the leg bones and a half-decayed leather cap beside the skull.

"And his hair is still there," exclaimed Harry with a shudder. "Ugh! He's an awful sight. Do

shut him up, Captain Frank. He gives me the shivers."

Captain Perkins dropped the lid, but laughed heartily as he did so.

"Well, he's no beauty," he cried. "Sort o' creepy I admit, but there ain't many lads can say they've looked on such a sight. A chap killed by real pirates and a-buried to look after their treasure."

The torch was now burning low and the party started to retrace their steps towards the open air. Suddenly Harry stubbed his toe and fell sprawling on the floor.

"Are you hurt, Harry?" cried Mr. Rogers, springing forward.

"No; I'm all right," laughed the boy, rising to his feet. "I wonder what I tripped over?"

He commenced groping on the floor. "Here it is," he announced. "Feels like a loose piece of rock."

Captain Perkins held the remnants of the torch close to the object, but before a good view was obtained the flame sputtered and went out.

"Something besides stone," the captain declared. "Bring it outside for a look. Can't see anything in here."

Guided by the light at the entrance, the party picked their way through the cave to the outer air.

"Why, it's a bunch of old iron," exclaimed Harry. "All cemented together with limestone."

"Bless your heart," cried Captain Perkins as he glanced at the object. "They're real pirates' weapons. Look, lads, there's a couple of sword handles and part of an old pistol."

"Hurrah!" shouted Harry. "Won't the fellows at home open their eyes when they see all these things?"

"Isn't it lucky we visited Trade Wind Key?" cried Paul. "Even if the treasure *was* taken away we found the cave and some real pirate things."

"And everything's just as shown on that old map," exclaimed Harry.

"It's certainly marvelous and most romantic," declared Mr. Rogers. "Your long search for the pirates' cave has been rewarded at last."

"Lor'! It's like a story-book a-coming to life," cried Captain Frank.

NOTE.—For a further account of Trade Wind Key and the pirates' treasure, see "An American Crusoe."

CHAPTER VI

THE MOST HISTORIC SPOT IN AMERICA

THE boys were anxious to see more of the little island which had once been the stronghold of the pirates, and Captain Perkins suggested that they should walk completely around it, following the shore. The beach was firm and hard and in most places walking was easy, and the boys were greatly interested in the pelicans and other sea fowl which rose in great flocks as the visitors approached them. They found the high, sandy hill indicated on the map; they stopped to gaze at the little cacti - covered islets off the beach, and clambered over the high limestone ridge that crossed the islet from shore to shore.



“There’s the lagoon,” remarked Harry as they approached a shallow inlet bordered with mangroves. “Everything is just as shown on the chart.”

"Except for the sea-monsters," laughed Mr. Rogers.

Beyond the lagoon the party swung around a broad, rounded point of beach and came suddenly and unexpectedly in view of the "Cormorant" riding at anchor.

Everyone stopped in surprise. A few yards from the yacht was an ugly-looking little gray gunboat with the Dominican flag flying from her stern.

"Where on earth did that boat come from?" exclaimed Harry.

"Lor' knows," replied Captain Perkins. "They're always a-hanging about a-looking for gun-runners. Reckon they think we're smugglers."

The party hurried forward towards the landing place, forgetting for the moment all about the picnic lunch they had intended to eat beneath the palm trees. As they came in sight of the launch they saw another boat drawn up beside it and from a shady spot beneath the trees a man in white uniform rose and stepped towards them.

"I'm Captain Nickerson, commander of that Coast-Guard boat," he announced with a pleasant smile. "Saw your yacht in here and ran in to investigate. Thought she might be a gun-runner or smuggler; it's so unusual to see a craft lying here. Your men showed me the yacht's papers and I

waited to meet you—such a pleasure to run across Americans down here—and to explain our intrusion.”

“Glad to meet you,” cried Captain Perkins. “Reckoned that was what ye was here for when I saw the gunboat. My name’s Perkins—owner of the ‘Cormorant,’ and this is Mr. Rogers, his son Paul, and his nephew, Harry Thurston.”

“Did you find the pirates’ treasure?” asked Captain Nickerson as he shook hands with the boys.



“We found the cave and an old buckle and some gold buttons in a chest,” replied Paul.

“And these old weapons,” added Harry. He showed the captain the piece of limestone containing the sword-hilts and pistol.

“And there was a skeleton in another chest,” said Paul.

“This is all most interesting,” declared the commander. “I’ve always heard there was such a cave here, but understood it had been found and looted several years ago. How did you first learn of the place?”

“Set down and have a bite with us, Captain,” cried Captain Perkins. “I’m fair famished and I

reckon Rogers and the lads have pretty good appetites, too."

As they picnicked under the palms the boys told Captain Nickerson about their last winter's cruise; how Harry had discovered the old map by falling into the ancient dungeon at St. Kitts and of their search through the various islands for the spot indicated on the chart. Then they told how they had met Captain Perkins, how he had at once recognized the map as representing Trade Wind Key and of their present cruise in Morgan's wake after buried treasure and sunken wrecks.

"You're certainly destined to have a mighty good time," declared Nickerson. "To judge by your past adventures I imagine you'll likely as not be successful. I'm firmly convinced there's plenty of buried treasure still hidden about. Too bad you didn't arrive a month ago. I could have put you in touch with a man who claims to know where there's such a hoard."

"Do tell us about it," cried Harry. "What's become of the man?"

"His name's Riviere," said Captain Nickerson. "A queer chap who was caretaker of a bankrupt estate over on the south side of the Bay. It seems that he ran across an old derelict of a Frenchman and, finding him a fellow countryman, took him over to his place and gave him a home. The old fellow

was blind and helpless and Riviere took care of him like a brother. Before the old cripple died he told Riviere a yarn about the treasure. Said his grandfather was a pirate and was chased into Samana Bay by a sloop of war and ran in among the keys over on the San Lorenzo coast of the Bay, where he hid his loot in one of the caves. A storm came up and wrecked his ship and he and the crew—or those that didn't drown—took to the bush and made their way to the towns on the south coast. The old chap—grandfather of the blind beggar—moved over to Haiti—and never got a chance to come back for his treasure, as the French and Spanish were at war at that time. When he died he left a rough map of the place where he'd hidden the treasure to his son. The son died of Yellow Jack and the map was buried with him. His son—the blind chap—had often seen the map and made one from memory and came over here to try and locate the loot. A tackle-block fell and hit him on the head and when they got through with him at the hospital he was stone blind. He couldn't find the place without his eyes, and whenever he talked about it people thought him off his head on account of the knock-out and wouldn't listen to him. Riviere was the only man that took him seriously, and after he died Riviere started out to look up the treasure. He found the remains of the wreck—or says he did—and claimed he'd located the

cave, but that the bottom had dropped out and the treasure was under three or four fathoms of water. He tried to get some one to stake him to a diving outfit to recover it, but couldn't get anyone to believe in him, and last month he sailed for Trinidad to try and get some relative there to help him."

"That Riviere chap's the man for us to run down," cried Captain Perkins. "We've got the diving outfit and everything else. If we can locate that old cave we'll yank up the treasure nex' to no time."

"The story sounds plausible, I'll admit," commented Mr. Rogers. "Although I really can't understand how the 'bottom' could drop out of a cave."

"I don't suppose it actually did 'drop out'," said Nickerson. "The caves over San Lorenzo way are peculiar. There are hundreds of them—each in a little conical hill by itself. Some of these hills are on dry land and others are in the form of small islands. Many of these have the caves above the sea, but in others the floors are covered by several fathoms of water. I've been in many of them and there is every evidence that they have risen or fallen during past years. Many of those which are now high and dry are filled with sea-shells and corals, and in some of those now submerged you can see stalagmites on the floors, proving they were once above the sea.

I expect Riviere's treasure-cave sank slowly in this way—if he told the truth about the treasure.”

“I should think 'twould be easy to find treasure, if it's just placed in a cave, by looking in each one in turn,” remarked Paul.

Nickerson laughed. “It does *sound* easy,” he replied, “but you'd find it like looking for a needle



in a haystack, as the old saying puts it. There are scores and scores of the caverns and some of them extend for hundreds of feet into the hills. It would take years to thoroughly explore them all.”

“You don't happen to know the name of the Riviere man's relative in Trinidad, do ye?” asked Captain Perkins. “I'm a-going to run down there and try to locate the Frenchman.”

“I'm afraid I can't help you there,” replied Nickerson. “The agents of La Honda—the estate where he was caretaker—have an office in San Domingo City. Lopez y Compania is the name, on

Calle Comercio, I believe. No doubt they'll be able to give you the information. But I must take my leave now. We're due in Sabana la Mar this afternoon."

Bidding good-bye to all and wishing the treasure-seekers the best of luck, the commander stepped into his little power-dory and soon boarded his gunboat.

"Isn't it rather unusual to find an American in command of a Dominican gunboat?" inquired Mr. Rogers as the party stood watching the little iron-clad get under way.

"Lor', no," replied Captain Perkins. "All these gasoline coast-guard craft are officered by Yankees. You see, Uncle Sam has charge of the customs down here and these tin gunboats are part of the service."

"They evidently keep a pretty sharp watch on strange vessels," remarked Mr. Rogers. "I shouldn't think there'd be much chance for smugglers."

The captain laughed. "With pretty nigh a thousand miles of coast, chock full of coves and bays and rivers, plenty of craft get in with contraband. 'Tain't so much the smuggling that Uncle Sam's a-trying to stop as the gun-running. If they can't get guns and ammunition into the place they can't revolute and revolutin's the curse of the country.

Spite of all that's done they manage to get the stuff in though and every little spell a new fracas breaks out."

The afternoon was now well advanced and as there was nothing more to keep them on the key the party boarded the launch and a few minutes later the anchor was up and the "Cormorant" was headed towards the open sea.

"See that little bay yonder?" said Captain Perkins, pointing to a small cove on the northern shore. "'Tain't much to look at, but mighty historical. First scrap 'twixt Injuns and Spaniards happened right in that cove. 'Bahia de las flechas' the folks call it, meaning 'Bay of the Arrows'."

"Aren't there any towns about here?" asked Paul. "I can't see anything but woods and a few small villages of huts."

"Not along hereabouts," replied the captain. "Back up the bay 'bout eight miles ye'll strike Santa Barbara, sometimes called 'Samana,' and back 'bout ten miles further and close to the head of the bay is Sanchez. Railroad runs from there into the interior to a place called 'La Vega,' meaning 'The Plain.' There's no use of visiting 'em, though. Santa Barbara's a neat little place, mostly settled by darkies from the States, brought down here when an American company leased a heap of land along the Bay. Sanchez is nothing but a rail-

road terminal. Ye'll find a plenty of things to interest ye around to the City, I'll wager."

By sundown the yacht was well into Mona Passage and Captain Perkins called the boys' attention to a dim, purple blur on the eastern horizon.

"Yonder's Porto Rico," he said. "It's the last bit of United States ye'll see for many a day, 'cepting we get a glimpse of Mona Island by starlight."

When the boys came on deck the following day they found the land close at hand to the north and Tom informed them that they had rounded the eastern end of San Domingo and were nearing Macoris.

"Are we going to stop at Macoris?" asked Paul when Captain Perkins approached.

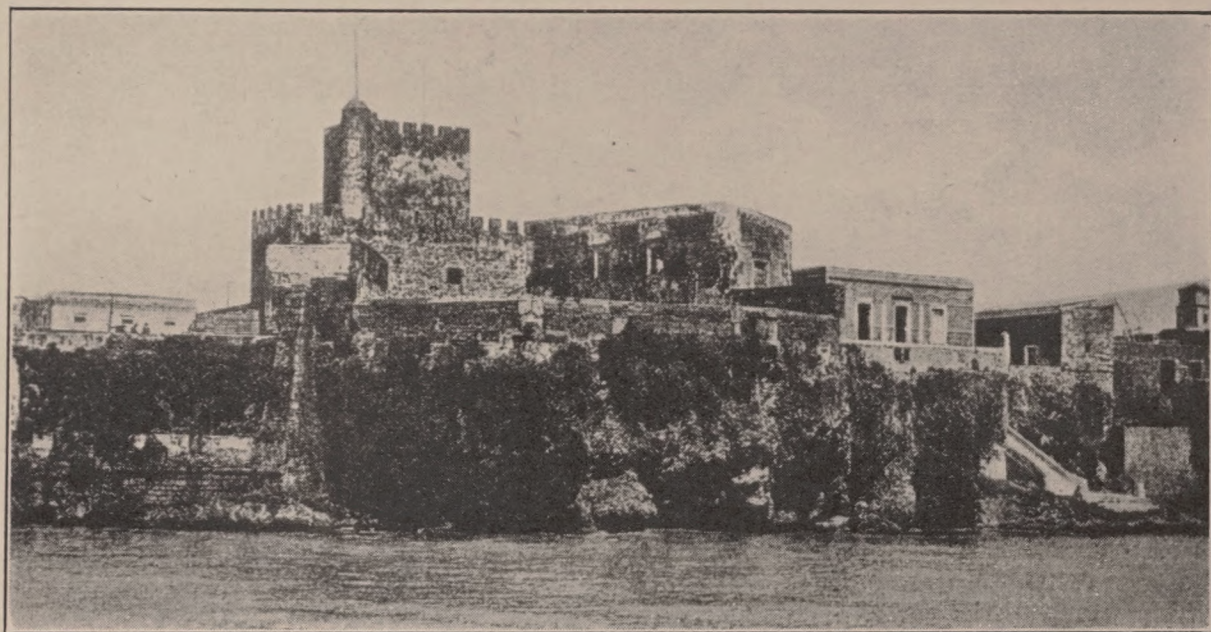
"No," replied the captain. "It's just a sugar town up the river quite a bit and nothing particular to see. If this wind holds we'll make San Domingo City before sundown."

Soon after lunch the captain pointed out a lofty cloud-capped peak that rose far above the mass of rugged mountains back from the coast.

"That's Loma Tina," he said. "Highest mountain in the West Indies. Pretty nigh two miles high."

"I'd like to go through the interior of San Domingo," remarked Harry. "It must be a wonderful country."

"Richest place in the Indies," said the captain.



The Homenaje, the oldest fort in America.



Half ruined San Francisco convent.

“I’ve never been through it myself, but I’ve talked with chaps that have. Forests filled with mahogany and lignum-vitæ; gold, iron, nickel, copper and I dunno what else, and a regular mountain of salt in one spot.”

“Don’t they mine the metals and cut the timber?” asked Paul.

“Not much to speak of,” replied the captain. “The roads are so all-fired bad they can’t get the best of the timber out and no one’s found the richest of the gold mines yet. In the old days the Spaniards got plenty of it—shipped more gold and precious stones from this island than from any of their colonies. All they get now’s what they wash out of the river beds.”

“Sooner or later the island will be developed,” remarked Mr. Rogers. “I presume a stable government would help a great deal towards bringing capital in to exploit the island’s resources.”

“Right as a trivet,” exclaimed the captain. “Get a good, solid government here and San Domingo’d make the rest of the world set up and take notice.”

By mid-afternoon the “Cormorant” headed in towards the entrance to San Domingo harbor and a few minutes later sails were furled and under power the yacht approached the mouth of the river.

“Isn’t that a fine old castle?” exclaimed Paul as the boys eagerly scanned the shore.

“Yonder’s the Homenaje,” said the captain. “Built in the time of the old conquerors—1509 if I recollect right. Oldest fort in America. Ye’ll hear tell of Columbus a-being shut up there in chains, but fact is he was thrown into prison on t’other side of the river. Ye can just get a glimpse of the ruins over yonder.”

“It’s a most imposing structure—whether Columbus was imprisoned there or not,” declared Mr. Rogers. “I didn’t imagine that anything so thoroughly mediæval in appearance and so beautifully mellowed by age was to be seen in the western hemisphere.”

The yacht was now passing through the narrowest portion of the river’s mouth, with the shores within stone’s throw on either hand, and a minute later entered the harbor proper.

Stretching along the river’s bank to the left was the ancient town, its waterfront lined with docks and shipping, its buildings stretching inland over a hill and here and there enormous ruins standing boldly up above the more modern structures. The boys had scant opportunity to take in the details of the town before the “Cormorant” reached the docks. Captain Perkins was busy with the customs and health officers, but as soon as the formalities were over the boys plied him with eager questions.

“Yonder’s the house of Diego Columbus,” he said

in reply to Paul's first question regarding a massive ruined building close to the dock.

"I never knew there was but one Columbus," exclaimed Harry. "Who was Diego?"

"Son of old Christopher," replied the captain. "He was Viceroy of the island and built such a whopping big house, with cannons on the walls, that the old King of Spain got scared for fear Diego'd take it into his head to start a government on his own hook. Fired him from his job on account of it."

"Didn't Christopher Columbus have a house here too?" asked Harry.

"Reckon he did," replied the captain. "But I dunno where 'tis. That tree yonder's where they say he moored his caravels." He pointed out an enormous, gnarled silk-cotton tree a short distance from the dock.

"It certainly looks ancient enough to have been a good-sized tree in Columbus' day," said Mr. Rogers. "But I rather question the truth of the tradition."

"Well, I dunno 'bout that," chuckled the captain. "There's plenty of things left that *was* here in his time and we might as well be a-stepping ashore and looking at 'em."

A few steps from the dock the party passed through the arched gateway in the ancient city wall.

"Goodness, what an enormous wall!" exclaimed

Harry. "I should think 'twould have been impossible to capture a city surrounded by such a protection."

"Pretty good shape for a bit of masonry nigh five hundred years old," remarked Captain Perkins. "But it didn't stop old Sir Francis Drake from attacking the town back in 1589. He didn't take it, but the Spaniards were mighty glad to get rid of him by a-paying a heap of money and jewels to buy him off. Left a souveenir of his visit in the shape of a cannon ball in the cathedral roof. Ye can see it there yet."

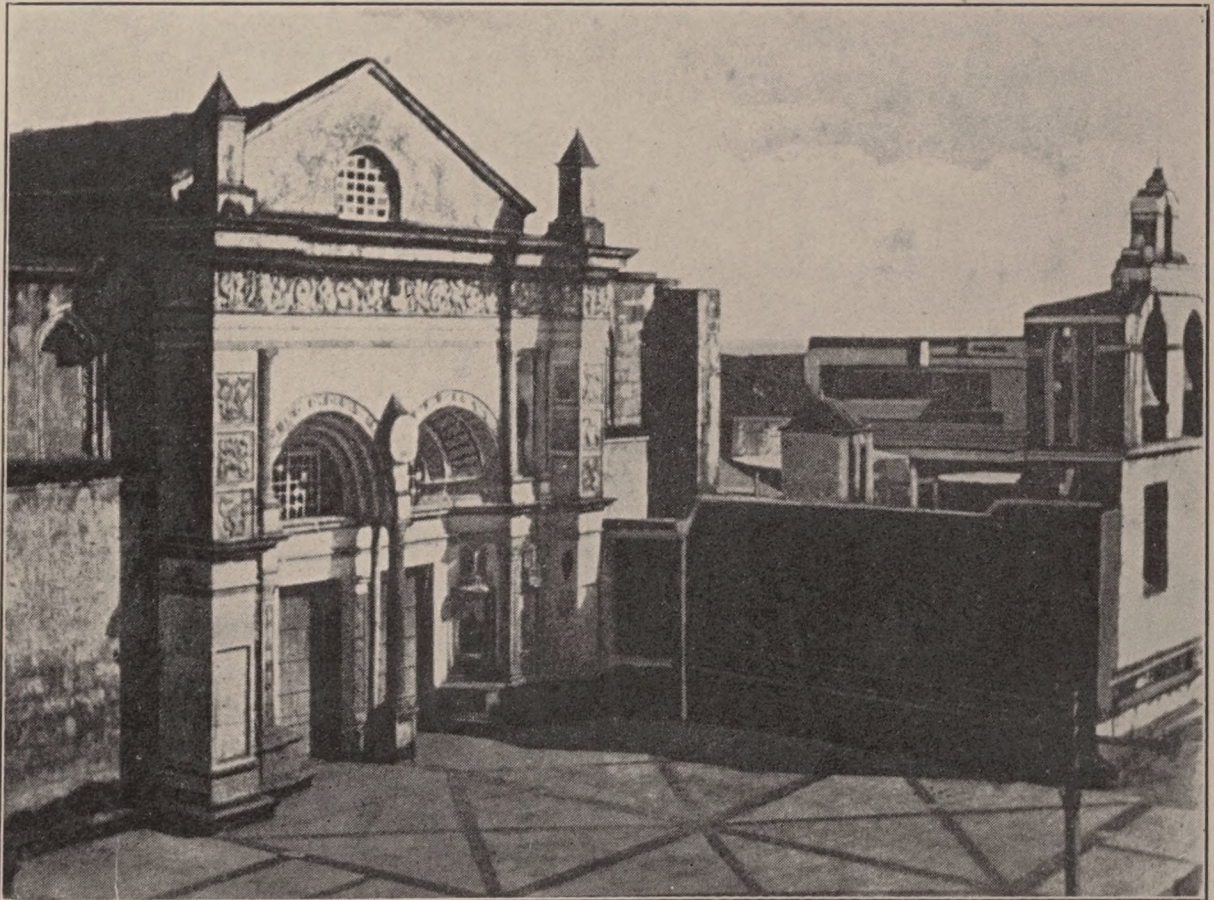
Beyond the wall the party strolled up the hill towards the central Plaza, the boys stopping frequently to gaze in wonder and interest at ancient houses with the arms of Alvarado, Ponce de Leon and other famous old grandees and dons above their doorways.

"I thought Havana was old and interesting," said Paul, "but it seems modern and new compared to this place. I feel as if I'd stepped back about four hundred years when I look at these houses of the men we read about in histories."

"I told ye 'twas the most historical spot in America," said the captain. "Wait a bit till ye get to the cathedral and see the bones of old Columbus himself."



They passed through the gateway in the city wall.



The massive Cathedral where Columbus sleeps.

“Why, I thought Columbus was buried in Spain—that the Spaniards took his remains from Havana when they gave up Cuba. That’s what we learned at school,” exclaimed Harry.

“That was a joke on the Spaniards,” chuckled the captain. “Ye see ’twas this a-way. The old admiral died in Spain and left directions to be shipped over here to San Domingo to be buried. When the French took the island back in 1765 the Spaniards dug up a coffin which they thought was that of Columbus and carted it off to Havana. That was the same coffin they took off to Spain when the Yankees licked ’em. That coffin didn’t have an inscription or anything to show who was inside, but later on another coffin was dug up here in San Domingo Cathedral with an inscription reading, ‘Discoverer of America, First Admiral and Illustrious and Famous Don Christobal Colon.’ Of course the Spaniards wouldn’t admit they’d made a mistake, but there’s not a mite of doubt that the coffin they took was that of the Admiral’s son, Diego, the same chap who built the big house I pointed out to you.”

They had now arrived at the pretty plaza, shaded with palms, and with the immense, massive cathedral on the further side. In the center of the plaza they stopped to admire a magnificent bronze statue

of Columbus, and then crossed the narrow street and entered the cathedral.

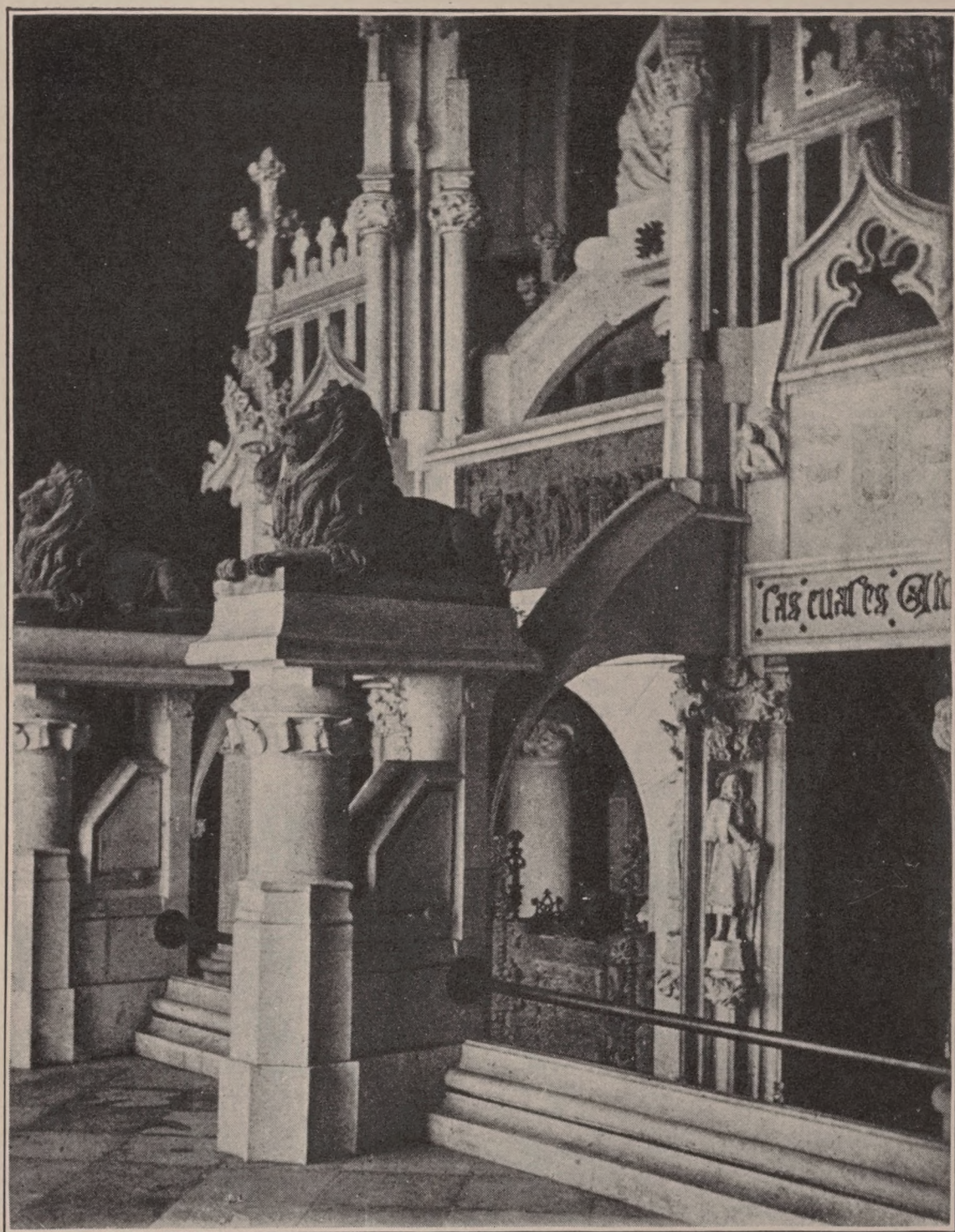
Huge as it had seemed from the outside, even larger it appeared when viewed from within. Before them stretched the vast nave floored with foot-worn ancient Moorish tiles. Far above their heads curved the great, groined arch of the roof, supported by lofty columns, and all about the sides were little chapels with altars loaded with gold and silver, and with many a rare painting by old masters hanging above them. Dominating all was the high altar of beaten silver and gold glinting dully in the soft light from the stained-glass windows.

All was impressive, beautiful and interesting, but as with one accord everyone turned towards a magnificent monument of Italian marble flanked by two carved lions. It was the tomb of Columbus and the boys gazed long in reverent admiration at this splendid memorial which the Italian government erected in honor of its most famous son.

Several hours were spent in the cathedral, examining the many interesting things it contained, admiring the intricate carvings, studying the paintings and mosaics, and listening to Captain Perkins' translations of the quaint inscriptions on the tombs of old Conquistadors.

At last the deepening shadows warned them that the sun was setting and, leaving the cathedral, a cab





It was the tomb of Columbus.

was hailed and the party drove here and there about the city. They saw the ruins of San Nicolas church with the tomb of bloodthirsty old Governor Ovando. They visited massive, half-ruined San Francisco within the roofless interior of which lie famous Ojeda and Bartholomew Columbus, founder of the city, and the captain pointed out the church of Santo Domingo looming imposingly against the western sky.

“That ought to int’rest you lads,” he remarked. “First college in America was a-started in that old church. Ever read about Las Casas, the priest who went along with Columbus and gave his life a-trying to help the natives, ’stead of killing ’em off or making slaves of ’em? Well, he’s the chap who ran the college yonder. Taught the youngsters their A. B. C.’s here ’bout a hundred years afore our ancestors first hopped ashore at Plymouth Rock.”

“Aren’t we going to look up those Lopez people?” Harry inquired as the carriage turned towards the docks.

“No use to-night,” replied the captain. “No one’s a-doing any business this time of day. First thing to-morrow I’ll hunt ’em up.”

The following morning they walked to the Calle Comercio, a well-kept business street bordered by numerous stores and modern buildings, and, after one or two inquiries, found the office of Lopez y

Compania. Señor Lopez proved a pleasant and agreeable young man who had been educated in the United States and spoke English perfectly.

“Yes, indeed,” he said, in reply to Captain Perkins’ inquiries. “I can readily furnish you with the address of Mr. Riviere’s cousin. It is E. Pinard, 33 Almond Street, Port of Spain. May I inquire why you desire to ascertain the whereabouts of Mr. Riviere? We found him very satisfactory while in our employ, but quite obsessed with the delusion that he held the secret of some hidden treasure. In fact it was for the purpose of enlisting the aid of his cousin to obtain the treasure that he went to Trinidad.”



Captain Perkins laughed. “That’s just *why* we’re a-looking for him,” he said. “We’re a-treasure hunting ourselves and I’ve got all the diving fixings on the yacht. Cap’n Nickerson met up with us over in Samana Bay and told us the yarn about Riviere. Calculated as how he might be willing to go shares on the treasure for the sake of our help.”

“Really you cannot be serious,” exclaimed Señor Lopez in a surprised tone.

“Lor’ bless you, of course I be,” cried the cap-

tain. "No earthly reason why Riviere shouldn't know where there's treasure. Plenty of it been hid and one chap's as likely to get it as another. 'Specially if a pirate's grandson tells him about it and gives him a map."

"I found a map and we found the treasure cave by its help," exclaimed Harry. "The treasure'd been taken away but we got some buttons and a buckle and some old weapons."

The boys then told about their adventures and the cave.

"Oh, I have not the least doubt that treasures still remain undiscovered in the islands; and especially in Santo Domingo," said Señor Lopez. "But it certainly seems strange to learn that you are deliberately setting forth to search for it. However, I wish you the best of success."

"Well, we find lots of fun in doing it, anyway," said Paul.

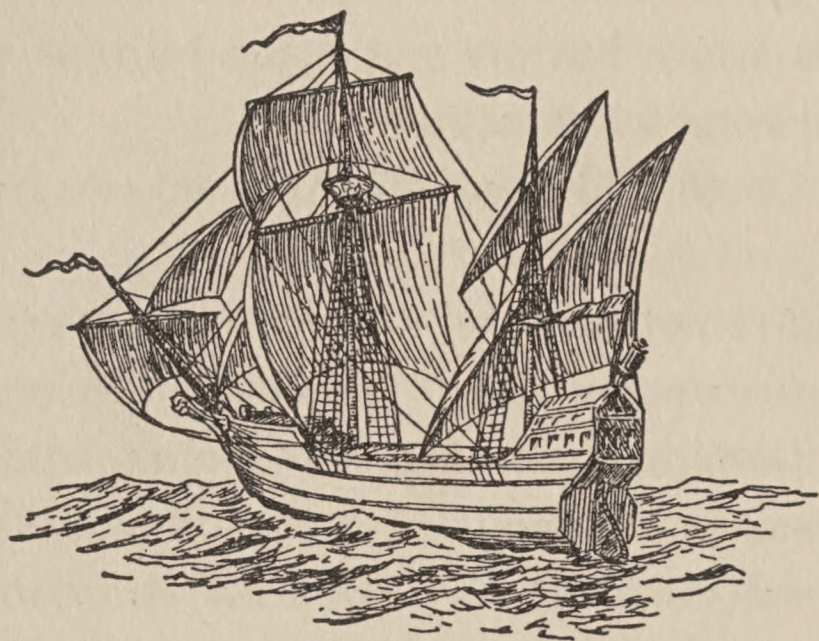
"And learn a great deal about the different places and people and their history," said Harry.

"In my opinion that is of immensely greater value than all the treasure ever hidden by the pirates," declared Señor Lopez as his visitors rose to leave.

As soon as they reached the street Captain Perkins gave vent to one of his hearty laughs. "Bet he thinks we're all crazy," he cried. "Some folks

don't have a mite of imagination or the least idee of romance. That Lopez chap might be a-setting right on top of a bunch of treasure and wouldn't look under his chair."

There was still much to be seen in the historic old town, and the day was spent visiting the various



ruins and ancient buildings, the Homenaje castle at the entrance to the harbor and the still older remains of the original town on the further side of the river.

They also made the acquaintance of several Americans who were employed in the revenue service and Captain Perkins invited them to dinner aboard the yacht.

It was a very merry little party that sat about the table under the awning on the after-deck, and the boys listened with the greatest interest to the

stories of adventure and the strange experiences related by their visitors.

“If I was to search for treasure,” remarked one gentleman, “I’d spend my time trying to find lost mines.”

“What are ‘lost mines’?” inquired Paul.

“Mines that were once worked, but which, for one cause or another, have been deserted and have not been rediscovered,” explained Mr. Clayton. “There are many of them in South and Central America and even here in Santo Domingo.”

“I can’t understand why they were deserted if they were worth working,” remarked Harry.

“There were many reasons,” replied their visitor. “Sometimes the Indians rose and massacred their Spanish masters and carefully concealed the mines to prevent others from working them. At other times disease or other causes, such as hostile natives or international wars, compelled the Spaniards to leave mines, which soon became hidden in the luxuriant growth of the tropics. In a great many cases, however, only the very richest of the ore could be worked by the ancient methods and the mines were abandoned as worthless, and yet with modern mining appliances and processes they would be immensely valuable. For example, here in Santo Domingo there were fabulously rich gold mines at one time. Millions of dollars’ worth of

gold and silver were shipped from here to Spain, and yet to-day there is not a single real mine known, although gold is found in nearly every river, and the natives frequently wash out dust and nuggets by the crudest methods. This is all placer gold, however, and the mother-lodes have been lost for hundreds of years. Over in Central America, at a place known as Chiriqui, between Panama and Costa Rica, there was once a marvelous mine known as 'Tisingal.' It's been lost for centuries and the man who finds it will be a multimillionaire in a short time."

"Speaking of the old mines," said another gentleman, "reminds me of the 'Pig of Gold,' the largest nugget ever found and which was lost right here in San Domingo."

"Do tell us about that," cried both boys.

"There's not much to tell," replied the other. "The nugget was found in the early days of the settlement and was brought to San Domingo City. The old chronicles state that it was in the form of a 'pig' and as large as a table. In fact, before it was put aboard ship to be sent to the King of Spain a party of eight men sat about the great nugget and ate a meal served upon it, and boasted that even the king had never dined from such a priceless table. The huge nugget, with a vast amount of other treasure was placed aboard a ship about to sail for Spain

but while at anchor off the town a sudden storm wrecked the vessel and sent the 'golden pig' and all the other treasure to the bottom of the sea."

"Goodness! I should think someone would search for that," exclaimed Paul.

"Couldn't we go down and look for it with the diving suit?" asked Harry.

Everyone laughed at the boys' earnestness.

"No use of that," declared Captain Perkins. "I heard of that treasure years ago and spent a good bit of time a-sounding about where the old ship was s'posed to 'a' sunk. No bottom there but soft ooze. I'll bet that gold's a-buried a hundred feet deep in mud."

CHAPTER VII

THE TIP END OF A CONTINENT

EARLY in the morning the "Cormorant" slipped silently down the Ozama River under the towering walls of the Homenaje and into the blue waters of the Spanish Main.



"When do you expect to reach Trinidad?" asked Mr. Rogers as the yacht plowed steadily towards the south, with the trade wind humming through her rigging.

"'Bout next Wednesday," replied Captain Perkins, "barring accident and if the wind holds."

"Why, that's four days," exclaimed Harry. "I didn't know Trinidad was so far away."

"'Bout eight hundred miles," replied the captain. "We're making pretty nigh ten knots and ought to sight land by daylight Wednesday."

"What land will we see first?" inquired Harry.

“The Carúpano mountains most likely,” answered the captain.

“Are they in Trinidad?” asked Paul.

“Lor’ bless your heart, no,” answered the captain. “They’re in Venezuela, just to the nor’ard of the Gulf of Paria, and Trinidad’s just t’other side of the Gulf. If we strike a little mite to the east’ard we’ll see Trinidad afore South America.”

For the next three days there was little to interest the boys. On every side stretched the sparkling sea, patches of gulf weed floated past, flying fish broke from the water and whirred away as the yacht plunged steadily onward; the sun rose and fell in a riot of gorgeous tints and the wind blew strong and steadily day and night.

The boys amused themselves by fishing and caught several fine dolphins and bonita; they studied maps and charts, practised splicing and tying ornamental knots under the captain’s direction, and listened to his yarns of the sea.

“Be up bright and early, lads, if ye want to catch the first glimpse of South America,” said the captain as the boys retired Tuesday night. “We’d ought to sight the coast a bit after sunup.”

When the boys arose the following morning and hurried on deck they looked ahead and saw land within plain sight.

"Is that South America?" asked Paul as the captain approached.

"It's the tip-end of the continent," he replied. "That blur of land to the east'ard's Trinidad."

The boys studied the new land through their glasses.

"It all looks just alike to me," remarked Harry presently. "It seems to be one continuous stretch of coast."

"'Tain't surprising," said Captain Perkins. "Trinidad's just a bit of South America cut off from the rest of the land by a couple of narrow straits—'bocas' they're called—meaning mouths. The one to the nor'ard's called the 'Dragon's Mouth' and the one to south'ard's called the 'Serpent's Mouth.' We're heading for the Dragon's Mouth now, but ye can't see it from here. Port of Spain's just inside the mouth, on the Gulf of Paria."

By the time breakfast was over the narrow entrance to the Gulf of Paria was visible, with the rich, green hills of Trinidad to the left and the Paria Peninsula to the right. Numerous sailing vessels as well as several steamers were in sight, as from various routes the ships approached the Dragon's Mouth, their courses converging as they neared the narrow entrance to the Gulf.

As they drew close to the Boca the boys discovered that what had at first appeared as the nearest

point of Trinidad was in reality a number of beautiful, wooded islets separated by narrow channels. With their great, wave-worn cliffs, smooth beaches and tropical verdure they appeared most attractive and here and there pretty villas and bungalows peeped from among the foliage.

As they passed these the broad, tranquil Gulf was exposed to view, with Port of Spain on its semi-circular plain, backed by lofty, green-clad hills. Passing the quarantine station on "Five Islands," the "Cormorant" came to anchor a short distance from the waterfront, and the boys gazed with interest at the busy, attractive city spread before them.

Between the neat stone and wooden buildings stretched wide, straight streets shaded by rows of great trees; here and there a church tower or some large edifice rose far above its lesser fellows; back among the hills country estates and suburban residences gleamed among the verdure and in the foreground the waterfront teemed with busy, noisy life.

In the harbor scores of sailing vessels and steamers rested at their moorings and back and forth between these and the docks countless lighters, tugs and launches passed and repassed, carrying passengers and cargoes to and from the ships whose draught prevented them from mooring at the wharves.

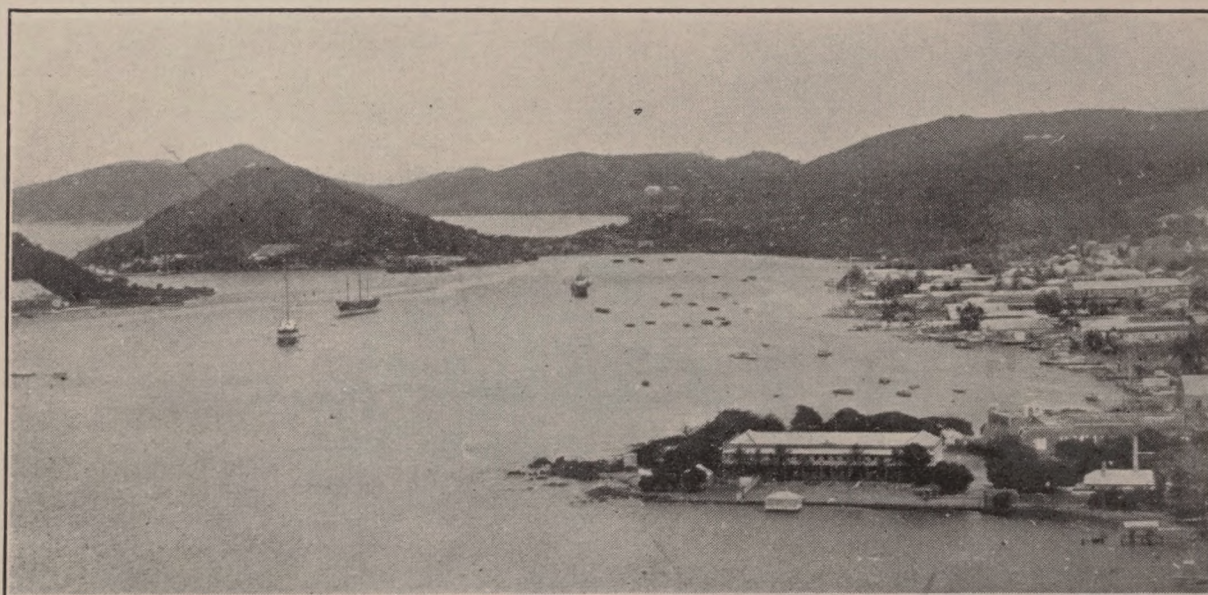
“Isn't it a busy place,” exclaimed Paul. “Next to Havana it's the most bustling, modern-looking city we've seen in the West Indies.”

“One of the busiest cities in the Antilles,” remarked Mr. Rogers. “When I was here many years ago the city was built in a ramshackle, flimsy manner with small wooden houses and stores. A disastrous fire afterwards swept the town and rendered thousands of people homeless. It proved a great blessing, however, for the city was rebuilt of stone and concrete, and the rough, narrow lanes were transformed to the broad streets and avenues of to-day.”

The party lost no time in going ashore and seeing the sights of the town. Marine Square, a fine avenue one hundred feet in width and extending from side to side of the town, excited the boys' admiration, but they found Brunswick Square even more attractive. Here, surrounded by great trees, was a splendid bronze fountain which Mr. Rogers told the boys was the gift of a former resident named Turnbull. As they wandered from place to place the boys found that the city was well provided with similar open “breathing spaces” with fountains or statues, while trees and ornamental shrubs abounded. The stores were large and well stocked; numerous hotels, restaurants and clubs were in evidence; there was a large public library and the party spent some time



Suburban residences gleamed amid the verdure.



Wooded islets separated by narrow channels.

examining the fine collections of island fauna and flora in the Victoria Museum. The beautiful government buildings on Brunswick Square also attracted the visitors and then, as the air was becoming insufferably hot, Captain Perkins suggested looking up Riviere's relative before taking a tram ride into the suburbs.

They had little difficulty in locating Mr. Pinard, who proved to be an elderly, gentlemanly Frenchman who had lived so long in Trinidad that he spoke English with scarce an accent.

"Ah!" he said in reply to Captain Perkins' inquiry, "I am so sorry. My cousin was here, yes. But I was unable to help him. We are all so poor and business is so dull with the terrible war. And now you arrive when it is too late, yes. My cousin, he has gone to La Belle France to fight in this war."

"I reckon there's not much use of following him there," laughed the captain. "Too bad he didn't hold on a bit afore runnin' off."

The boys were greatly disappointed at the failure of their search.

"It's a shame, after we came all the way to Trinidad to find him," exclaimed Harry. "And now," he added, "he may be killed in battle and no one will ever get that treasure."

The captain, on the other hand, looked upon it as a good joke. "'Tain't no use a-fretting, lads,"

he cried jovially. "Just as like as not the Riviere chap wouldn't a-shared with us, or perhaps he didn't know where the treasure was hidden, after all. There's just as good treasure in the sea as ever was found, as ye might say. And as for a-com-ing to Trinidad, it's only just a mite out of our way and ye'll find plenty to see here that'll interest ye."

Boarding an electric car, or "tram," as the natives called it, the party was soon whirling rapidly through the outskirts of the town towards the Savanna and other points of interest in the suburbs.

"What a mixture of people there are here," said Paul. "There seems to be every race under the sun."

"Pretty nearly," replied his father. "Spaniards, Germans, French, English, Portuguese and Italians among the Europeans; Indians and mestizos from Venezuela; negroes and colored folks; Hindus and Brahmins from India; Armenians, Syrians and Turks; Japanese and Chinese, and a goodly number of citizens of the United States for good measure."

"Do they all speak English?" asked Harry.

"Not by any means," replied his uncle. "Many of the natives converse in Patois; Spanish is quite generally spoken by the merchants, as is French and English; the coolies usually have a smattering

of English or some European tongue, besides their own dialect, and the Venezuelans, of course, speak Spanish. The lingua-Franca of the working people on the estates is Patois, however, and you'll find laborers from every corner of the earth conversing in that dialect."

"I've seen lots of coolies," said Harry, "but not so many as I expected. I thought Trinidad was full of Hindus."

"Ye'll see a-plenty of 'em at San Fernando and other places where they work on the estates," said Captain Perkins. "Seeing as we're here we might as well see all the sights. To-morrow we'll run down to La Brea and the Pitch Lake, that's not pitch at all, but asphalt, and stop at San Fernando on the way."

The car had now reached the Savanna and the party alighted and entered the Queen's Park Hotel for luncheon. Here they had a splendid view of the great, level, grassy pasture of some two hundred acres surrounded by magnificent trees and encircled by a splendid road and the electric tramway.

"The Savanna is the Trinidadians' public park, race course, cricket ground and ball field combined," said Mr. Rogers. "Later in the afternoon it will be gay with visitors; carriages and automobiles will arrive by scores and cricket and golf matches, polo and football will hold full sway."

“Whew! I'd hate to play a game of football to-day,” declared Paul. “It's just sizzling hot.”

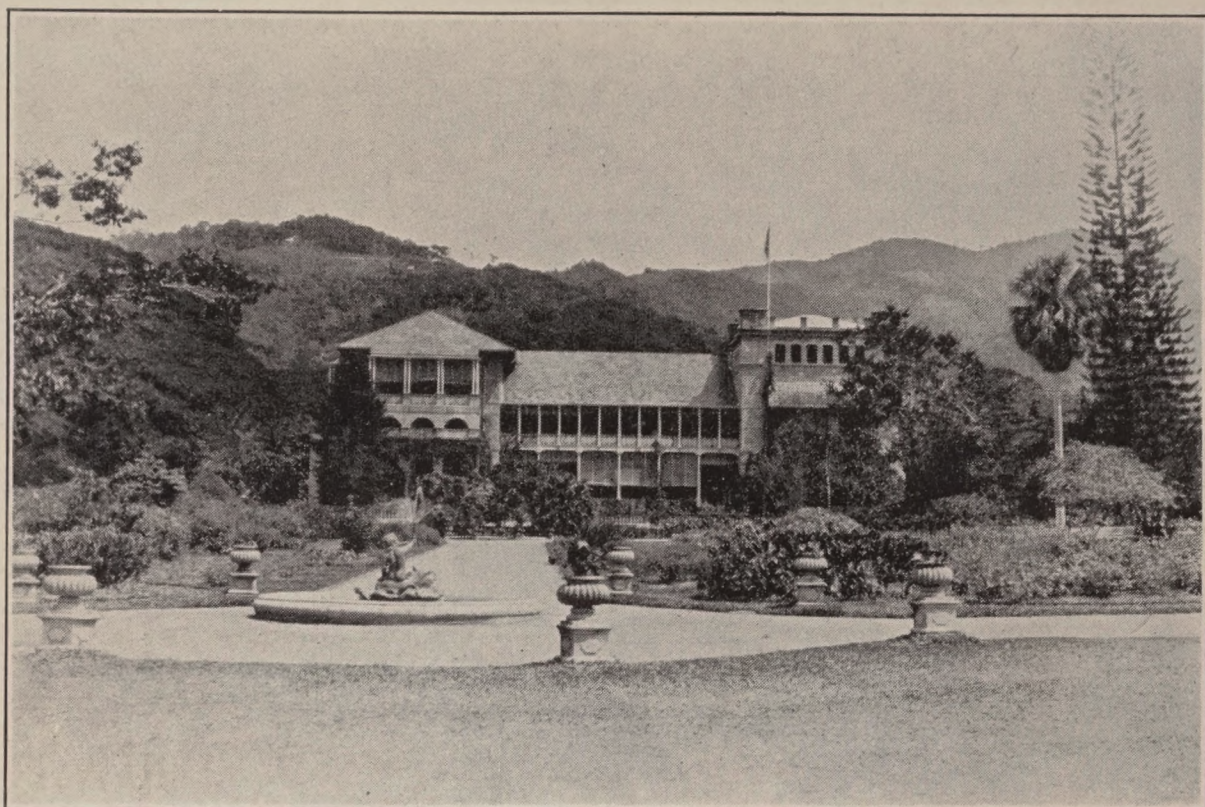
“It will be cooler towards evening,” said his father. “Trinidad, or rather Port of Spain, is one of the hottest spots in the West Indies, but it's not unhealthy. After business hours everyone resorts



to the parks, the Savanna or to their homes among the hills to enjoy the cool evening breeze.”

After lunch the visitors strolled across to the splendid Public Gardens and the magnificent Government House and its grounds. Although the boys had seen the extensive botanic gardens in the other islands—in Dominica, St. Vincent and Havana—they were amazed at the wonderful extent and beauty of the garden at Trinidad. The walks, shaded with scores of strange tropical trees, were cool, and the air was laden with the scent of rare and gorgeous flowers and heavy with the spicy odor of nutmeg, cinnamon and cloves. Beautiful butterflies flitted here and there; sweet-voiced birds sang from their retreats among the foliage, and gorgeous humming birds swept like living jewels from bloom to bloom.

The party spent several hours in the garden, watched the athletic natives at their afternoon sports on the Savanna, dined at the hotel and re-



The magnificent Government House and grounds.



They strolled through the public gardens.

turned to Port of Spain and the "Cormorant" late in the evening.

The following day the anchor was raised and under motor power the yacht started southward over the smooth blue waters of the landlocked Gulf towards San Fernando and the Pitch Lake.

"I notice that many of the names of places are not English," remarked Paul. "How is it that an English island has so many Spanish names for towns and other localities?"

"Trinidad has an interesting history," replied Mr. Rogers. "It was discovered by Columbus on his third voyage to the New World on July 1st, 1498. He named it 'Trinidad,' or 'The Trinity,' on account of the three-peaked mountain that rises yonder, and which is now known as the 'Three Sisters.' Columbus entered through the southern boca, which he named the 'Serpent's Mouth,' sailed along this same western coast, through the Gulf of Paria, traded with the natives, who were friendly, and sailed out through the Dragon's Mouth, bound for Santo Domingo. After the great discoverer, came Amerigo Vespucci, Alonzo de Ojeda, whose tomb you saw in San Domingo City, and Juan de la Costa, who discovered and named Venezuela. For a number of years many of the Spanish explorers stopped at Trinidad, among them Pinzon, who discovered the Amazon, and Solis, who discovered the Rio de

la Plata, but it was nearly thirty years after Columbus visited the island before a settlement was made. This was at the junction of two rivers, about six miles from the sea, where, in 1584, a Spaniard named Antonio de Berrio y Oruña, founded a town which he named San José de Oruña, in honor of himself. The town still remains, and is known as St. Joseph, although in 1595 it was seized and burned by English troops under command of Sir Walter Raleigh, who was searching for the fabulous El Dorado, and desired Trinidad as a headquarters, from which to send expeditions into the Orinoco country. For nearly two hundred years the Spaniards held the island, during which time they had many conflicts with the natives, until the aborigines were finally exterminated. The colony, however, was very poor, and it is said that at one time the governing board or 'Cabildo,' composed of illustrious grandees, had but a single pair of 'small clothes' between them, and the noble Dons were thus compelled to take turns in wearing them when obliged to appear at public functions. Late in the eighteenth century large numbers of French refugees sought shelter on the island after being driven out by the massacres and uprisings in Haiti, Martinique and Guadeloupe, and with this influx of immigrants the island commenced to prosper and improve. At the height of the island's prosperity,

in 1797, a British fleet arrived, commanded by Admiral Harvey, and carrying 8,000 men under Sir Ralph Abercromby. The Spanish governor surrendered almost immediately, and ever since Trinidad has been a British colony. Oddly enough, many of the old Spanish names are still retained, in other cases the French appellations have survived, while in still other instances the original names have become Anglicized. Thus the name Trinidad, as well as San Fernando, La Brea, Maraccas, etc., are Spanish; the French words 'Savanne,' Manicou, Sapajou and the Patois tongue are in daily use, while Puerto de los Hispanoles has become Port of Spain, Boca del Serpiente has been changed to Serpent's Mouth, Boca Grande has become the Dragon's Mouth, ancient San José is now known only as St. Joseph and the tri-pinnacled mountain from which the island derived its name is called the Three Sisters."



"Well, that's all mighty interesting," declared Captain Perkins, "but here we're approaching San Fernando and we'll step ashore and see a bit of India without the trouble of going to Asia."

The yacht was soon at anchor, the launch lowered and the party prepared to go ashore.

"Reckon we'd better bring Rami along," remarked the captain. "It'll do him good to have

an hour or two among his own folks, and he'll be mighty useful as an interpreter."

Rami was greatly pleased at the idea of going ashore, and his eyes sparkled with joy when he stepped from the launch into a crowd of Hindu men, women and children.

The boys found the town of little interest, save for the coolies, for the district is devoted exclusively to sugar cane plantations, which stretch away on every hand. It was to labor on these great estates that the coolies were first brought to the island between 1846 and 1854, and while many of them are still indentured field hands and little better than slaves, yet as fast as their terms expire they settle down to an independent life as planters, merchants or free laborers.

The boys felt as if they had stepped into an East Indian town as they wandered through the village, for Hindus and Brahmins were everywhere, and many types which the boys had never before seen were in evidence. There were Hindu shops filled with strange foods and wares of the Orient; coolie silversmiths worked, squatting before their rude stone anvils, on which they hammered silver coins into rings, bracelets and ornaments; solemn Brahmin priests stalked through the lanes and streets; Hindu mendicants in rags begged alms of the strangers; coolie belles in filmy, flowing lace and loaded with

tinkling anklets, arm bands, rings and chains, tripped smilingly along the dusty thoroughfares, and naked, spindle-legged children laughed, cried, played and squabbled here, there and everywhere.

Rami was as great a curiosity to the San Fernando Hindus as they were to the boys, and they crowded about him, keeping up a constant chatter of Hindustani. He proved a great help to the visitors, however, for the boys were anxious to secure a collection of jewelry and native curios as souvenirs, and with Rami's help they obtained a splendid assortment at prices which seemed absolutely ridiculous.



As they retraced their way to the dock they were escorted by quite a cavalcade of well-to-do coolies, many of whom bore baskets of fruit, bundles of cane, live fowls, eggs and other delicacies, which they bestowed upon Rami and his employer as parting gifts.

As Tom remarked, the launch looked like "a bloomin' bumboat," and there was scarce space for the passengers to seat themselves when everything had been placed aboard the little craft.

An hour and a half after leaving San Fernando the yacht came to anchor at La Brea, or Brighton,

the port from which the asphalt is shipped from the famous Pitch Lake.

Several vessels were lying at the jetty, and from an endless chain of buckets the crude asphalt was being ceaselessly tumbled down a chute into the holds of the waiting ships.

The rattle and crash of the asphalt, the creak and roar of windlasses, cables and trucks, and the orders and shouts of the laborers created an uproar that was well nigh deafening and reminded the boys of the din of lower Pearl Street when an elevated train is passing overhead. The sun beat down with equatorial fervor, the air was still and humid, and before the party had reached the end of the pier they felt as if they had been in a Turkish bath.

“That bucket cableway is a great improvement over the old method of loading,” remarked Mr. Rogers. “When I visited the lake, years ago, the asphalt was hauled to the shore in carts, loaded into small boats and lightered out to the vessels at anchor.”

The boys had expected to see a real lake of asphalt and were rather surprised when they arrived at the edge of a broad plain, with pools of muddy water, coarse weeds and grass, clumps of trees and palms upon its uneven, dull brown surface, and were told that this was the Pitch Lake.

“Why, it’s not a lake at all,” exclaimed Paul. “It looks like a plain of sun-dried mud.”

“The asphalt or pitch is mostly semi-solid,” remarked his father. “But here and there liquid asphalt oozes up to the surface.”

The party walked forward across the strange place and approached a crowd of negroes busily digging the asphalt and loading it into trucks.

“These raised ridges show where the asphalt is rising,” said Mr. Rogers. “They are called ‘moutonees’ or sheep-backs.” He showed the boys the little hillocks separated by water-filled gullies from one to five feet in depth and several feet wide.



They were now near the center of the plain, which was about 100 acres in area, and the boys noticed that as they walked along their feet left impressions upon the surface, which was quite soft.

“It’s just like an asphalt pavement on a hot day,” said Harry.

A strong, rather unpleasant odor of sulphur was noticeable and in several spots the boys saw pools of liquid asphalt, which they examined curiously.

“Don’t these men find the liquid pitch when they dig down?” asked Paul as the party stood watching the negroes digging out the asphalt.

"No," replied Mr. Rogers. "But wherever it is dug out new asphalt rapidly fills the holes, so that the supply is practically inexhaustible, while the amount in sight has been estimated at 4,500,000 tons."

"I shouldn't think even that amount would ever be used up," said Harry.

"It wouldn't last long if the entire world depended upon Trinidad for its supply of asphalt," said Mr. Rogers. "But as vast quantities come from Sicily, and there are very large deposits in Venezuela, there is little danger of exhausting the Trinidad supply, even if new material was not constantly forming to replace what is taken out."

"How long have people been digging this asphalt?" asked Harry.

"Sir Walter Raleigh is said to have first discovered its value," replied Mr. Rogers. "In 1595, at the time he attacked San José, he used the asphalt to calk the seams of his vessels, and reported that there was enough here to 'pitch the vessels of the whole world for centuries.' It was not until 1888, however, that the Pitch Lake became a commercial proposition. At that date the Trinidad government leased the deposit to an American company; but it has since been transferred to a London firm."

"Isn't it strange that palms, trees and pineapples should grow on such a desolate spot?" remarked Paul as the party started back towards the shore.

“There is a great deal of soil mixed with the asphalt,” said Mr. Rogers, “and this is very rich, and wherever there is sufficient for a plant to take root, vegetation thrives and grows luxuriantly.”

“There’s kind of a queer story ’bout this ’ere lake,” remarked Captain Perkins; “sort of legend, ye might say.”

“Do tell us about it,” said Paul. “Those old legends are always interesting.”

“Well, ’tain’t much of a story,” said the captain. “And I dunno how true ’tis. They say that years ago there wasn’t a lake of asphalt here at all, and that the Injuns had a village on the spot. ’Twas a fine place to live and was overgrown with pine-apples. The pools were full of fish and pigeons and ducks and other birds were all about. The Injuns believe the spirits of their dead folks go into humming birds, but for some reason or other these chaps started in to kill the humming birds. The Great Spirit punished ’em for this by sinking the whole village one night, and ever since there’s been this ’ere Pitch Lake above the spot where they were swallowed up.”

“That story may have some foundation in fact,” remarked Mr. Rogers. “It is not improbable that



an earthquake or some similar subterranean force caused a fissure in the ground to open and that through this opening the asphalt was forced up and spread over the area it now covers."

"Like as not," agreed the captain. "Something like the Mud Volcanoes up to Prince's Town."

"What are the 'Mud Volcanoes'?" asked Paul.

"It's a spot over yonder a few miles," replied the captain. "Used to be a round, flat spot of mud there, but 'long in 1887 there was a sort of eruption and a heap of little mounds of mud sprung up with muddy water a-pouring from 'em. They smells most as much as this 'ere Pitch Lake. The niggers call it the 'Devil's Woodyard,' 'count of the dead trees and branches scattered about. They're mortal 'fraid to go there after dark."

"Will we go to see that?" asked Harry.

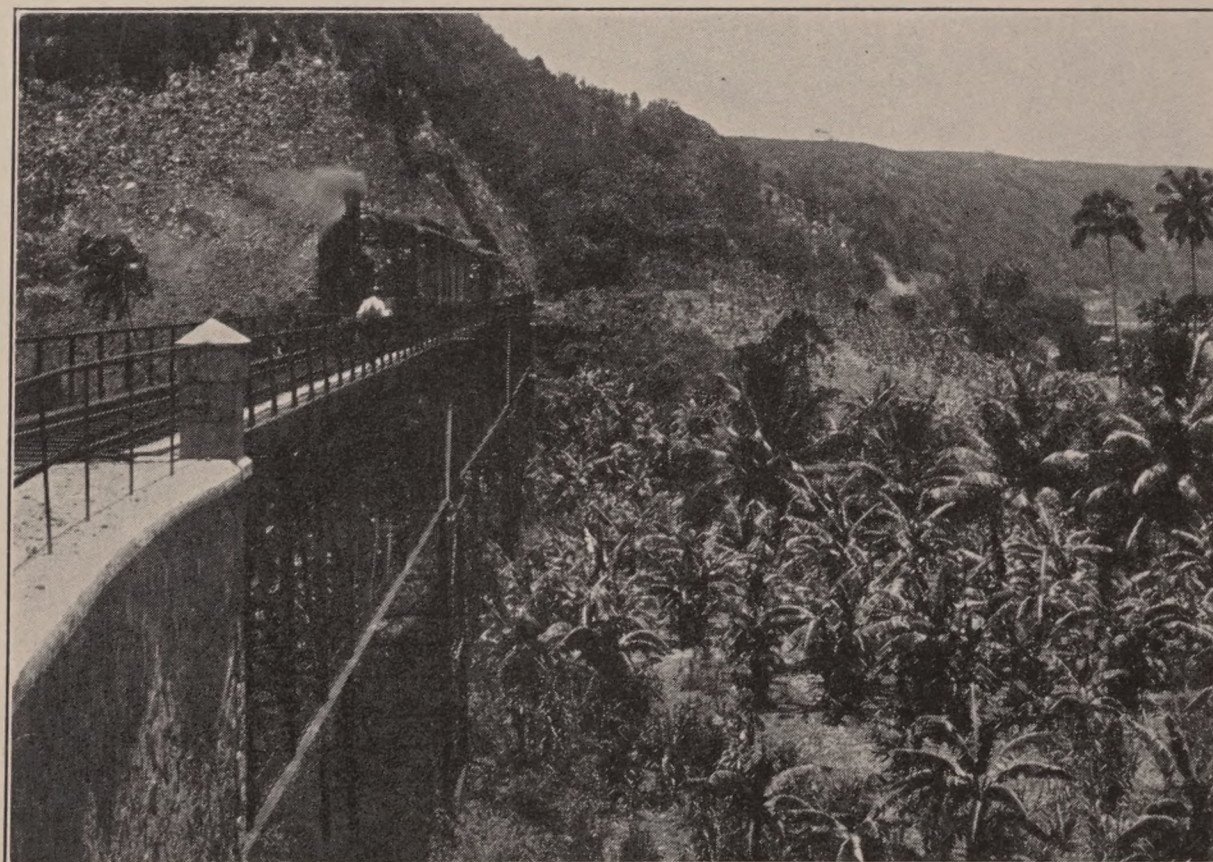
"I reckon not," replied the captain. "It's too all fired hot down on this part of the island. I'm pretty nigh boiled alive now, and I always thought I was a sort of human salamañder. Lor', but 'twill feel good to get out in the breeze again."

The party had now reached the end of the jetty and were soon aboard the yacht and headed back towards Port of Spain.

The next day the captain suggested a trip to the Caura Waterfall, and to save time the railway train was taken to St. Joseph. The boys found this town



Beautiful rivers with verdured banks.



From the car windows they watched the scenery through which they passed.

quite interesting, after having heard its history, and Mr. Rogers pointed out the old residence on the Valsayn estate, which he said contained many relics and documents of Spanish days, including the treaty signed by Governor Chacon and Lord Abercromby.

From St. Joseph the party took the line eastward towards Arima, and from the car windows watched with interest the marvelously beautiful scenery through which they passed. Deep ravines, lofty hills, rich tropical verdure and broad plains covered with bananas, cacao, pineapples and fruit orchards were passed in rapid succession. The train rumbled over bridges and trestles, above beautiful rivers with verdured banks, whirled around the edges of precipitous gullies, roared through tunnels and gave the boys an excellent idea of the character of the interior of Trinidad. At the El Dorado estate horses were procured and the party rode for some seven miles through the most attractive of tropical scenery. Then dismounting, they plodded onward for a mile or more through the great virgin forest, which reminded the boys of the "high woods" of Dominica and St. Kitts.

Presently the roar of falling water reached them and a few moments later they came suddenly in view of the cataract. From the midst of rich verdure that crowned a cliff the water dropped in a single, splen-

did cascade for three hundred feet into a great stone basin, surrounded by wonderfully colored flowers, magnificent ferns, strange orchids and waving palms. The air was cool with flying spray and a gentle breeze; leaves, flowers and vegetation gleamed with silvery sheen from the perpetual



shower and a fragment of rainbow shimmered across the surface of the cascade as a ray of sunlight glinted through a rift among the tree tops. It was a beautiful and wonderful sight, and the boys vowed it the finest thing they had seen in all the islands.

“The Maraccas Fall is a little higher,” said Mr. Rogers in reply to a question from Harry. “But it can only be seen at its best during the rainy season. Another famous waterfall in Trinidad is the Blue Basin Fall. Unlike this cataract and that of Maraccas, in which the water is clear as crystal, the water of the Blue Basin is of the clearest and most beautiful cerulean blue, much like the color of the sea along the shores of St. Croix and other white sea beaches in the Caribbean.”

The party lingered by the cataract for several

hours, ate a picnic luncheon in the shade of the woods beyond the reach of the spray and, retracing their steps, reached Port of Spain at sundown.

"It's a wonderfully beautiful island," said Paul. "I'd like to go all over it."

"You'd need a heap of time for that," said the captain. "It's a whopping big place; pretty nigh a hundred miles long and fifty wide; most as big as Porto Rico. But ye've seen the best of it, and to-morrow morning we'll up anchor and head for the Pearl Islands."

"The Pearl Islands!" exclaimed Harry. "Where are they?"

The captain chuckled. "They're not down on the maps as such," he replied. "Margarita's the proper name for 'em, but 'Pearl Islands' is a sight prettier and more fitting, seeing as how Margarita means pearl and pearling used to be the chief business."

"Will we see any pearl divers?" asked Paul.

"Shouldn't be a mite surprised," replied the captain. "But it's an interesting spot and one of those wrecks is close alongside of 'em. We'll stop over at Carúpano for the night and give you lads a chance to step ashore on the continent."

CHAPTER VIII

PEARLS AND PIRATES

AT daylight the next morning the "Cormorant" passed out through the Dragon's Mouth and the boys took a farewell look at Trinidad and devoted their attention to the Venezuelan shores they were passing.

All through the day they sailed along the Paria Peninsula and late in the evening cast anchor off the Port of Carúpano. It was the first South American town the boys had ever seen, and they lost no time in going ashore. They found the town contained little of interest, but was quite different from the island ports they had seen. The eleven thousand inhabitants were mainly Venezuelans of mixed blood, but universally courteous to the strangers. A band was playing in the little plaza and the party spent some time seated under the trees in the soft evening breeze listening to the dreamy Spanish music and watching the inhabitants on their nightly promenade or "pasear" about the plaza. On their return to the dock they stopped to glance into a brightly lighted dance hall, where

swarthy men and dark-eyed señoritas in mantillas and rebozos were moving slowly about to the strains of a guitar and castanets.

“Why, these people have learned the tango and other modern dances already!” exclaimed Paul. “They’re not so much behind the times down here after all.”

Captain Perkins roared with laughter. “Lor’ bless you!” he cried. “These folks knew how to tango, as ye call it, afore old Uncle Sam wore long breeches. ‘Modern dances,’ ye say. Well, well! That’s good. Modern dances! Why, lad, they’ve been a-dancing these steps down here in South America for ’bout three hundred years.”



“Well, they dance it much nicer than the Americans,” declared Harry.

“They certainly do,” agreed his uncle. “The Spanish-Americans are natural musicians and dancers, and no Northerner ever acquires the languid grace or passionate fervor, which is a birth-right of these people. They seem never to tire of their dances, and if you dropped in here at daylight to-morrow you’d find these same couples still dancing about.”

Before noon the next day the yacht was within plain sight of Margarita and the boys expressed surprise at the size and height of the island.

"It's wonderful how little we ever learn about these places at home," said Paul. "I never even heard of Margarita until Captain Frank told us of it, and yet it looks like a very large place."

"It's pretty nigh fifty miles long and half as wide," said the captain.

"How high are those mountains?" asked Harry. "They look enormous."

"Four thousand feet," replied the captain. "Did ye ever learn the difference a-'twixt a island and a continent at school?"

"Why, not exactly," replied Harry. "I believe our teacher said that if a body of land contained two distinct mountain ranges it was a continent, or something to that effect."

"That's an old saying," chuckled the captain. "But 'cording to that rule, Margarita's a continent, for there's two distinct mountain ranges on this island, as ye'll see."

"I can't see but one range," declared Harry. "But if you say there are two, I'll believe you."

"Second one's jest back of the one ye see from here," said the captain. "Ye can't see it from this side. Fact is, the island's pretty nigh cut in two by a whopping big lagoon. The two sides are just held

together by a narrow neck of land 'bout a hundred and fifty feet wide and not more'n ten feet above the sea. Always seemed to me a good bit of storm might break through and make Margarita into two separate islands."

"Are there any towns here?" asked Paul.

"Three or four," replied the captain. "The capital and largest town's called 'Asuncion,' and the principal port is Pampatar, on the sou'east coast."

"Do all the people make a living from pearls?" asked Harry.

"Lor', no," laughed the captain. "There's close on to 20,000 folks live here and the pearl fishing's pretty nigh played out. A heap of the people make fishing their business, and the dried fish is shipped ashore to La Guaira an' other Venezuelan towns. A lot more of 'em make a living weaving hammocks that have the name of being the finest in the world. Others make hats, others tiles for roofs and the wimmen folks make mighty fine embroid'ry and lace. They're not such a bad lot, by any means, even if their ancestors were mostly smugglers and pirates."

"I do believe I read something about this place in a story," exclaimed Paul. "I hadn't thought of it before, but I remember now. It was a story about a shipwreck and a search for a missing heiress and

some Americans visited this island and found it settled by fierce outlaws and smugglers."

The captain laughed heartily. "Well, whoever wrote that was away off his course," he cried. "They're as peaceful a lot of folk as ye'll meet. I dunno but they may smuggle a bit now and again, 'cause it's a-putting temptation in their way to have the free Dutch islands so handy. It used to be a great haunt for pirates, to be sure, but they're law-abiding enough now."

The yacht was now close to the island and presently came to anchor before the little town nestling at the foot of the towering mountains.

The boys found Margarita quaint, old-fashioned and very foreign, while they at once became the center of interest to crowds of natives, who seldom saw visitors from the North. Everyone gabbled and chattered in colloquial Spanish, and Mr. Rogers and the boys were compelled to call upon Captain Perkins to act as interpreter. They bought numerous samples of native handiwork, including several beautiful hammocks, visited the ruins of ancient Spanish forts and then, hearing of a spot where pearl fishing was carried on, embarked in the launch and ran along the coast to the fishing village.

Here they found immense heaps of pearl-oyster shells rotting on the beach and the stench was unendurable, save when to windward of the piles. The



“How high are those mountains?” asked Harry.



The little town nestling at the foot of the mountains.

overseer was a Frenchman, who spoke excellent English, and he gladly exhibited his accumulation of pearls, explained the process of fishing and made the boys a present of some shells containing unmarketable pearls attached to the beautiful lustrous "nacre" within the oysters.

He explained that the best of the beds had been fished out and destroyed long ago, and that nowadays the pearling rights were leased out and the beds of young shells were protected. He also told the boys that the pearl



beds were first discovered by Columbus, that vast treasures in pearls were sent to Spain from Margarita by the colonists in early days, and that among the crown jewels of Castile and Leon were many beautiful pearls from the island.

"But now," he added, "few of size or worth do we find, M'sieus; more profitable even is the shell than the pearls, and yet the fishery yields nearly \$1,000,000 a year."

"Do your divers ever find wrecks when after pearls?" asked Harry.

The manager smiled. "That I cannot say," he

replied. "If they found a wreck with anything of value they would say nothing. Once two of them suddenly left the work, went to the mainland and lived like rich men, and everyone said they made their wealth by finding a sunken treasure ship, but I cannot say; but now divers go not for the pearls. Those we take we catch with 'arrastras,' what you call 'drags.' "

"Ever hear of a wreck to the nor'east, along by the Frayles Reefs?" asked Captain Perkins.

The Frenchman crossed himself hurriedly. "Mon Dieu, yes," he exclaimed. "The wreck of the 'Good Venture.' It is there, M'sieu, for with my own eyes I have seen it, a great ship of the olden time. But no one dares dive to that. It is as safe as if in the middle of the great ocean."

"Why don't they dare?" asked Paul. "Is the water too deep?"

"Deep, no," replied the Frenchman. "Perhaps fifty feet—not more; but the Devil looks after his own, M'sieu, and never has one escaped who has sought to obtain the treasure of the 'Good Venture.' The story is this, M'sieus. Of its truth I cannot tell, for it happened many centuries ago, but all the world here swears it is so. The 'Good Venture' was a British ship—a pirate, and her captain most bloody and merciless. From sacking the towns of the main and seizing ships, he was sailing, laden deep

with treasure, for Hispaniola. When off Margarita he sighted the 'Ave Maria,' a Spanish ship, and gave chase. The 'Ave Maria' was coming from Spain and carried no treasure and few guns; but aboard were many Holy Sisters and Padres, bound for the missions of the new world. Finding that they were hard pressed, the Spanish captain sought to elude his pursuer by running through the narrow channel between the reefs and called upon a Good Father to pray for the success of the dangerous ruse. The priest stood upon the high poop-deck and lifted up a crucifix, and as he did so the English pirate fired at the gleam of gold upon the cross. His shot struck true and the Padre fell dead upon the deck with the crucifix broken to a thousand pieces by the ball. But swift was the vengeance visited upon the pirate ship, for as she veered to fire the shot she struck full upon the jagged reef and sank with all her bloody crew, while in safety the 'Ave Maria' slipped between the rocks and keys out upon the open sea beyond."

"That's a mighty fine story," declared the captain, "and I don't doubt it's Gospel true. Reckon the old Britisher deserved all he got, too. But I don't see what that's got to do with a-gettin' of the treasure by Christian folks to-day."

"The people say," continued the Frenchman, "that the Bon Dieu has willed that the wreck re-

main forever as a warning to others and that about it He has placed fierce currents and eddies which no man may overcome. Upon the surface of the sea it is calm, and one may look upon the wreck beneath. I myself know that even an anchor of iron, if dropped toward the wreck, will be whirled about and drawn away as if by unseen hands."

"Well, I reckon that might be so, too," said the captain, thoughtfully. "Just the same there's no harm in looking at that wreck, and I guess we might as well see it. It's mighty interesting, after hearing its history."

All the way back to the "Cormorant" the boys could talk of nothing else but the strange and thrilling story related by the Frenchman.

"Do you suppose it's just superstition, or is it possible there may be such currents as he describes?" asked Mr. Rogers.

"I expect it's a little of both," answered the captain; "I've seen spots where there's such currents, but I'm a bit surprised the old wreck's held together if it runs like that here. We'll find out when we sight it, and if there ain't any currents that are risky I'll have a shy at fetching up that treasure myself. Whether we get it or not, it proves one thing——"

"What's that?" asked both boys.

“That the old chart of mine’s the genuine article,” replied the captain. “It’s the first wreck marked on the map that we’re a hunting for, and it’s there right and proper, just as marked.”

It was too late to think of attempting to locate the wreck that afternoon and the boys spent the rest of the day exploring the neighboring portions of the island and learning what they could of its resources. They found that the climate, though warm, was healthy; that the land was dry, arid, and unproductive; that springs of water were scarce; that but three small rivers were on the island; and that undeveloped veins of various minerals existed in many places. They finished the day with a swim in a secluded sandy cove, and early the next morning set sail for the northern end of the island.

As they neared the spot where the wreck was indicated on the chart, Captain Perkins anchored the “Cormorant” in the lee of a little islet and lowered the launch. Then, proceeding slowly along, everyone kept a sharp lookout through the clear, transparent water for signs of a wreck.

Masses of brilliantly colored coral; great, waving, purple and yellow sea-fans; immense sea-rods and other strange marine growths covered the rocky bottom as with a marvelous submarine forest. Here and there great conch shells crawled slowly about, brilliantly tinted fish of strange forms flitted among

the waving marine plants, and corals and immense sea-urchins, great red-crabs and bright hued starfish, lurked amid the crevices of the reefs. It was all wonderfully fascinating to the boys, and Harry declared that, even if they didn't find the wrecked pirate ship, they would be well rewarded for their trip by this view of the ocean's bed.

Back and forth they passed, round and round they circled; but no wreck was seen, and they had about given up when Paul noticed an unusually large mass, seemingly of coral of peculiar form.

"What a regular miniature mountain of coral that is," he exclaimed, pointing through the water to the spot.

The captain glanced in the direction Paul indicated: "Lor' bless you," he cried; "yonder's the wreck."

A moment later the launch was above it, and now the boys could see that what had at first appeared merely a confused, isolated mass of coral was in reality the sunken hull of a good-sized vessel.

The high poop, bluff bows, and protruding ribs and timbers could all be distinguished; but so covered with a growth of corals, sea-weeds and marine formations as to be almost unrecognizable as wood. The deck had long since fallen in and only a great, yawning, black cavern marked the interior of what had once been a staunch ship.

“Do you suppose that’s really the ‘Good Venture’?” asked Harry.

“Not a speck of doubt of it,” cried the captain. “Leastwise it’s just where she ought to be, and she’s certainly old enough to ‘a’ been a real pirate. We’ll soon see if old Frenchy was ‘a’ telling the truth about those currents or just a yarning.”

As he spoke he rapidly uncoiled a light line attached to a heavy lead sinker and dropped it overboard.

Breathlessly the boys watched it descend through the clear water; down it dropped—two, three, four fathoms ran out, when suddenly a distant shout caused everybody to look up with a start and glance toward the “Cormorant.”

They all uttered cries of astonishment and alarm. The yacht was drifting rapidly toward a jagged, surf-capped reef, while Tom worked frantically at the anchor lines and Rami waved his arms and shouted wildly from the after deck.

Instantly the wreck was forgotten. The captain dropped the sounding line and, with the motor at full speed, headed the launch toward the yacht.

“Lor’, what all-fired shenannigan’s broken loose now,” cried the captain, as the little craft tore through the water.

“What *do* you suppose has happened?” exclaimed Paul.

“Something must be dragging her along!” cried Mr. Rogers. “Perhaps a whale or some other creature has fouled her anchor rope.”

“O dear, I’m afraid we’ll be too late,” exclaimed Harry; “she’s nearly on those rocks already. Why *don’t* they do something?”

Another moment and the launch was alongside and the party scrambled aboard.

Mr. Rogers seized the tiller, Paul dived below and started the big motor, and Captain Perkins and Harry rushed forward.

Tom had cast over the second anchor, but a glance showed that the vessel was still moving toward the reef, which was now within a dozen feet of the “Cormorant’s” stern.

Hardly had Harry and the captain reached the forecastle when the throb of the motor was felt through the little ship and, with a shout of “Cut them cables,” the captain drew his knife across one taut rope, while Harry and Tom strove frantically to knock out the pin that held the shackle to the chain of the other anchor.

For a moment the yacht hung motionless, then the chain slackened and the three slipped the shackle-bolt. As the yacht forged ahead the loosened chain fell rattling upon the reef alongside and the planking grated and bumped against the jagged rock, while the combing swells breaking upon the reef

dashed back upon the deck. In a minute they were safe, the reef was astern and the frightened, excited men and boys took a long breath.

“Lor’, that *was* a close shave,” cried the captain; “what run afoul o’ ye, Tom?”

“Blow me if I knows, sir,” replied the sailor. “I wuz a settin’ ’ere as easy as ye please, a chinnin’ with the bloomin’ Hindu an’ a-watchin’ o’ ye a squintin’ arter ther wrack, when all to oncet Rami jumps up an lets out a bloomin’ yell. I looks about—a-thinkin’ ’e ’ad a-seen a bloomin’ ghost or suttin’—an’ I sees as we’re a-driftin’ starn down on yon reef. Blow me, thinks I, the bloomin’ mud-hook’s a-draggin’, an’ I runs forrard and gives ’er more chain. But, Lor’, ’stead of fotchin’ up, the bloody ol’ hooker’s jest a-gettin under way an’ a-backin’ to the reef like as if her bally kicker was a pullin’ of her on reverse. Then I shoves over the kedge—a-thinkin’ as ’ow mebbe t’other hook’s a-foul an’ then you comes along and ’ere we be.”

The captain scratched his head, looked thoughtful for a moment and remarked: “I ain’t what ye’d rightly call a superstitious chap, but I dunno. There’s a heap of queer things in this world, and I reckon I’ll let other folks try for that ‘Good Venture’ wreck’s far as I’m concerned. Perhaps that French chap’s yarn’s not all imagination after all.”

“Beggin’ your pardon, sir,” said Tom, as he

hitched up his trousers and cast a glance toward the reef, now far astern, "hit's too bloomin' uncanny to suit me. 'Tain't nat'ral fer no ship to be a-draggin' two anchors along o' four knots on a ca'm day. There's somethin' bloomin' queer about it, if ye arsk me."

"Don't you suppose it's some powerful tide-rip or current that sets in between the reefs at certain times?" inquired Mr. Rogers. "I know in the north there are such things and that even large vessels are dragged by tides below the surface."

"Like as not," replied the captain. "Just the same, if the current's strong enough to hike the old 'Cormorant' along like that there's no use a-trying to do diving alongside that wreck. I expect it's all natural enough; but I'm not so keen on treasure-hunting as to go down where there's any such sort of tide-rips. No, siree, we'd a been in a pretty mess if the old 'Cormorant' had a-landed on those Frayles reefs."

"What does Frayles mean?" asked Paul; "it's a funny name."

The captain banged his fist on the cabin roof. "Lor' bless ye," he cried. "The old Frenchy's yarn was true, I'll wager. 'Frayles' means 'priests.' I'll bet ye the reefs were named after the fathers on that there 'Ave Maria' 'count of their being saved by 'em. I hadn't thought of it afore."

CHAPTER IX

A STRANGE WAY OF HUNTING

THERE was no reason for stopping longer at Margarita and the "Cormorant" was headed southward towards the shore of the mainland some twenty miles away.

Passing the island of Coche, with its tiny fishing villages, the yacht crossed the strait and rounding a cape came in view of a good-sized town.

"That's Cumana," said Captain Perkins in reply to Harry's question. "I didn't count on stopping in there; but I've got to have a squint at the bilges where we bumped along the reef and Cumana's a sight better place than La Guaira for that."

"Is it an interesting place?" asked Paul.

"It's the oldest city on the American continents," replied the captain. "Founded in 1520 by Gonzalez Ocampo; forty-five years afore St. Augustine, Florida, and eighty-seven years afore old Cap'n Smith met up with Pocahontas."

"Was it ever attacked by pirates?" inquired Harry.

"I dunno as 'twas," replied the captain. "But

'twas wiped out by the Injuns soon after 'twas settled. Ye see the Spaniards used to run across from San Domingo and Porto Rico and killed off the natives who fought, and carried the rest away as slaves. When a bunch of folks settled over here at Cumana the natives just had a good chance to get even and murdered the whole crowd. If it hadn't been for old Las Casas—the priest chap who started the university in San Domingo City—there wouldn't 'a' been any Cumana, I reckon. Las Casas started the colony over again and proved such a good friend to the Injuns that the place grew and prospered and as far as I know everyone lived happy ever arterwards—as the story-books say. But here we are at the port, lads, and ye can see for yourselves what there is to be seen."

The boys found that Cumana was not built directly upon the sea-coast but beside the Manzanares River nearly a mile from the shore with a tramway and excellent roads connecting it with the port. The city was very ancient and picturesque, with about ten thousand inhabitants, but it appeared to be very busy and prosperous and a number of vessels were in the harbor. The captain wished to attend to the examination of the "Cormorant's" hull at once and the boys strolled about the town in company with Mr. Rogers.

In one of the patios they caught sight of a great,

red flamingo stalking about on its spindly legs, and they stopped to watch the strange bird. The boys were greatly interested and tried to ask questions of the bird's owner who, by gestures, invited them to enter the courtyard for a closer view of his pet. Unfortunately he spoke only Spanish and to the boys' queries merely shrugged his shoulders and replied, "*No entiendo Ingles Señores.*" Then he called to someone within the building and in answer to his summons a negro boy appeared. The Venezuelan spoke rapidly to the darky and the latter, turning to the visitors, remarked:



"He says as how I to make talk fo' he, sahs."

"Why, do you speak English?" cried Harry.

"Ah surely does, sah," replied the darky with a grin. "I's f'um Trinidad, sahs, an' a British subject."

"That's fine," declared Mr. Rogers. "Now we've an interpreter we'll get along famously."

With the boy's help Paul and Harry learned that the flamingo had been captured in the neighboring Gulf of Cariaco, where many kinds of rare and strange waterfowl were very abundant.

In reply to a question the boys were informed that vast numbers of herons, ibis, egrets and other birds were annually caught for their plumes, while still

more were captured and sold to zoölogical gardens and menageries.

“How do they catch the birds?” asked Paul. “I thought flamingoes and similar birds were very wary and hard to obtain.”

“Easy for to cotch wif calabash, sah,” replied the negro lad.

“How on earth do they catch the birds with a calabash?” asked Harry.

“De bush-man he tie plenty calabash in de water,” explained the darky, “an’ leave fo’ a spell where de bird flock. When de fowl grow ‘custom’ to he an’ doan make ’fraid de bush-man slip calabash over he head an’ swim quiet-like to de birds. When come close ’longside he reach out he han’, grab de bird by he laig an’ pull he quick under water.”

“That’s the funniest way of catching birds I ever heard of,” declared Paul. “I’d love to see it done, but it’s an awful shame to kill them for their feathers.”

When they returned to the yacht they found the captain had completed his examination of the hull, and that except for a few torn and loosened copper plates no injury had been done. The plates had been repaired and the yacht was now ready to resume the cruise.

The boys told the captain about the flamingo and

the strange manner in which the birds were captured.

“I reckon if ye’d like to see it done we can manage it,” he replied. “The gulf’s a mighty pretty place and as long’s we’re so close we might just as well take a run up and see the sights. Ye may get a chance to shoot a ’gator or go on a bit of a hunt into the bush.”

“Hurrah, that will be fine,” cried Paul.

“Let’s start right away,” exclaimed Harry.

As soon as some fresh vegetables and fruits, which the captain had ordered, arrived the anchor was raised and the “Cormorant” was headed up the gulf.

On either hand the shores were covered with the most luxuriant tropical verdure, alternating with well-kept gardens and cultivated land, and the boys thought it the most beautiful body of water they had ever seen. Mile after mile they chugged over the calm and tranquil surface and still the water stretched ahead.

“How long is this gulf?” asked Harry. “I don’t see any end to it.”

“About fifty miles,” replied the captain. “And ’bout seven miles across. We’ll stop at that village yonder and get a guide. I don’t know much about the place farther up.”

Accordingly the yacht was anchored near a little

village on the shore and the party boarded the dinghey and landed on the beach.

The captain soon found a young native who agreed to show them the haunts of the wildfowl and with this half-breed guide they returned to the "Cormorant." A few miles further on the water became shoal and the native advised anchoring the yacht and proceeding in the rowboat. Presently they rounded a little promontory and the boys cried out in wonder as a large flock of flamingoes rose with loud croaks and a great flapping of wings from a mud bank just beyond. Their scarlet feathers, long legs trailing behind, and slender necks gave the birds an appearance both strange and beautiful and the boys watched with intense interest until the last of the great birds had disappeared beyond the mangroves that bordered the water.

A few moments later a magnificent white egret flapped from the trees close to the boat and as the little craft entered the shadow of the mangrove swamp, ibis, boatbills and countless herons flopped from their feeding places in the mud and water and perched awkwardly upon the low branches.

"They don't seem much afraid," remarked Paul. "It's for all the world like rowing through a zoölogical park."

"Goodness; look at that log! It's moving!" cried Harry.

“Cayman,” half whispered the guide.

“It’s a crocodile!” exclaimed Mr. Rogers.

“Careful, lad, and ye’ll get him,” said the captain.

Harry, with gun ready, watched the great reptile, which he had mistaken for a log, as the boat was silently sculled forward.

“Now’s the chance. Aim for his eye,” whispered Mr. Rogers.

At the report of the rifle bedlam seemed let loose as on every hand hundreds of egrets, herons and other waterfowl rose squawking and screaming from their hiding places in the swamp.



“Ye fetched him!” shouted the captain as the crocodile gave a tremendous flip of his tail and then lay still.

A moment later the keel grounded upon the muddy bank of the creek and springing from the boat the half-breed approached the saurian with caution.

“*Que tiro bueno!*” he exclaimed as he stopped and examined the little round hole behind the crocodile’s eye.

“He says it’s a bully good shot,” explained the captain. “Yon’s a whopping big ’gator. Reckon we’ll leave him here till we come along back. No use of lugging his hide into the swamp.”

He explained his decision to the native, who agreed that it was the best plan, and the boat was again paddled forward into the mangroves.

"Your turn next, Paul," said Harry, and handed the rifle to his cousin. The frightened birds had now settled down, but it was some time before another crocodile was seen. Paul saw him first where he lay basking upon a fallen tree within a few yards of the boat, and fired hastily. With a tremendous splash the reptile slid into the swamp, but he was evidently hit, as the commotion in the water proved.

"Reckon ye won't get that chap," remarked the captain. "'Gators are tough beasts and like as not he'll get over his hurt."

"I'm sorry I didn't take more care," said Paul in a disappointed tone. "I'll bet that fellow was bigger than Harry's."

"No use o' fretting," said the captain. "There's a plenty more 'gators in the swamp."

No more crocodiles were seen, however, and a half mile further on the boat shot forth into a broad lagoon. As they came in sight of the open space the boys looked in perfect amazement at the sight which greeted them. Wherever they glanced the place fairly teemed with birds. Flocks of tree ducks swam upon the surface, great clumsy pelicans moved slowly about, long-legged white and blue herons

stood motionless in the shallow water and a dainty jacana ran nimbly across the water-plants close to the boat. In the middle of the little lake a gleaming scarlet patch indicated a flock of flamingoes and along the farther shore a long line of egrets looked like a bank of snow against the dark background of the trees.

“Isn’t that a wonderful sight!” exclaimed Harry.

“I didn’t suppose there were so many water-fowl in the world,” said Paul.

After a short survey of the place the guide paddled the boat into the mangroves; and, out of sight of the birds, skirted the lake until close to a large flock of feeding birds.

“He says he’ll catch some now,” the captain explained after a few sentences with the half-breed. “Watch close and ye’ll see how it’s done.”

“Don’t let him kill any birds,” said Paul. “We don’t want to injure a single one. Tell him to catch one or two without hurting them and we’ll let them go after we’ve examined them.”

“All right, lad,” agreed the captain. “I ain’t keen on a killin’ the pretty critters myself.” He gave some orders in Spanish to the native who nodded and grinned as he slipped from the boat into the water. In his hand the man held a large half-calabash, pierced with several small holes, and, plucking a leaf-covered branch from a nearby man-

grove he secured it to the calabash. Then stooping until his mouth was level with the water he placed the calabash, with its screen of leaves, over his head and started towards the unsuspecting birds. As the little bunch of leaves moved slowly and smoothly over the surface of the lake the boys could scarcely believe that beneath it was the wily native.

"I don't wonder the birds are fooled," remarked Harry. "I'd never suspect anything if I saw that myself."

"Isn't he afraid of crocodiles?" asked Paul.

"Reckon there ain't any here," replied the captain. "Birds wouldn't be so thick if there were many 'gators about. Water's too shallow."



The calabash was now close to a flock of birds and the boys watched intently. Suddenly a bird opened its wings as if to rise, but the next second disappeared beneath the surface.

"There goes the first one," chuckled the captain.

"Why, it didn't even squawk!" exclaimed Harry.

Two more birds disappeared and then with a great flapping of wings and terrific cries of alarm the flock rose and flew off in all directions. From where they had been feeding the half-breed rose from the water with three struggling birds in his grasp.

He soon reached the side of the boat and the boys

examined with interest the specimens he had secured in this novel manner.

One was a dainty white egret, another was a curious boatbill, while the third was a lovely rose-colored spoonbill.

“Regular menagerie,” laughed the captain.

The birds were soon released and seemed but little frightened at their unusual experience, and the boat was again headed back towards the swamp.

Two crocodiles were seen, but both slipped into the water before the boys had a chance to shoot, and the boat finally reached Harry’s dead prize and was drawn ashore. The native made quick work of skinning the huge reptile, but the others found even the few minutes they waited almost unendurable because of the mosquitoes.



With the skin of the crocodile in the boat they hurried forward followed by clouds of the obnoxious insects and were glad indeed when they saw open water before them.

“What’s that white thing over there?” asked Paul, pointing to one side of the slowly-flowing creek.

“Dunno,” said the captain. “We’ll have a look.”

They were close to the peculiar object before they realized what it was.

"It's a dead alligator!" cried Harry.

"Right ye be!" exclaimed the captain.

The dead crocodile was floating belly-up, stranded on a submerged log.

"Well, ye got your 'gator after all," said the captain as the half-breed turned the creature over and pointed to the fresh bullet hole in the head.



"Most generally they sink and don't come up. Reckon this chap started to swim down stream afore he died and tried to crawl out on this 'ere log."

Paul was immensely pleased to obtain a trophy equal to Harry's and the boys were both in high spirits over the success of their trip.

The native was put ashore at his village with more money for his day's work than he would have obtained from a score of dead birds, and the party boarded the yacht and headed for Cumana.

"Might as well be making along towards La Guaira," remarked the captain. "The wind's fair and as there's not much to be seen on this coast we'll shove the yacht along all night. Ye'll see a pretty sight to-morrow morning, lads."

Early in the evening they passed Barcelona with its twinkling lights, which the captain informed them

was a busy little town and the terminus of a railway to the interior.

“Rincon’s the port,” he added. “The town itself’s back from the shore a mile or so alongside the river. Over to the east’ard’s Guanta, and beyond ye’d see Santa Fé, if ye sailed in close.”

“Are there any towns between here and La Guaira?” asked Harry.

“Plenty of ’em,” said the captain. “Mostly small places, but all doing a pretty good trade. All much of a muchness though and nothing of particular interest in ’em.”

“Wasn’t La Guaira taken by Morgan on one occasion?” inquired Mr. Rogers.

“Yes,” replied the captain. “He took La Guaira and started in to take Caracas. One of his men turned traitor and gave the scheme away and the Spaniards beat him off. You’ll not be surprised when you see the trail that leads inland from the port to the capital. Had a pretty tough job a-taking La Guaira for that matter. The old rascal’d like as not failed there if it hadn’t been for a lot of priests and nuns he’d captured in sacking Cartagena. He made them carry the scaling ladders and shove ’em up against the walls of the town and as the folks wouldn’t fire on the nuns the pirates got in.”

"Did any other pirates ever take the place?" asked Harry.

"Preston took Caracas seven years after La Guaira was founded—in 1565," replied the captain. "Landed at a spot they call Macuto, down to the east'ard, with 400 men, marched over the mountains, and sacked the capital and got safe off without losing a ship. Later on, along in 1680, Garmont and his Frenchies looted La Guaira, and in 1739 the Dutch tried their hand. They got well licked and the Britishers were driven off in 1739 and 1743. After that nothing much happened till 1812 when an earthquake came along and knocked the place all to bits and pretty nigh wiped out Caracas at the same time."

"It must be a very interesting spot, historically," remarked Mr. Rogers.

"Will we go to Caracas?" asked Paul.

"Ye bet we will," said the captain with emphasis. "Couldn't think of missing that place. Paris of South America they call it."

All they had seen and learned of the tropics had not prepared the two boys for the magnificent spectacle which greeted them when they reached the deck early the next morning.

The yacht was sailing slowly on a calm sea of deepest azure, silvery gulls winged back and forth with querulous cries above the rippling wake,

bright-hued fishing boats bowed and courtesied to the ocean swell,—their sails flashing in the brilliant sunshine, and a gray-hulled “Red D” liner, outward bound with the Stars and Stripes flying from her taffrail, was passing within a few hundred feet.

But all the life and beauty of this sea picture paled into insignificance and were given scarce a glance as the boys turned their eyes towards the south.

From the edge of the breaking surf a stupendous mountain rose sheer for 8,000 feet, its face a precipice of dull red, its forest-crowned top half hidden in fleecy clouds and its ridges and ravines wonderful with the rich green of tropic foliage and the purple of dense shadows. At its base—and dwarfed to liliputian size by the tremendous heights above—nestled a little town, the red-roofed houses and gaily-tinted buildings filling a lovely amphitheater of verdured slopes, while in the foreground, behind a gray sea-wall, the masts and funnels of many vessels were sharply outlined against the waving palms beyond.

“Didn’t I say ye’d see a pretty sight?” cried the captain joyously. “Ever see anything to beat it?”

“It’s marvelous,” declared Mr. Rogers. “I can’t imagine another such sight in the entire world.”

The boys were silently studying the wonderful scene through their glasses.

"Gracious! There's a railway track on that cliff!" cried Paul. "I can see a bridge and a train."

"O' course there is," laughed the captain. "That's the road to Caracas. The capital's over the edge of the mountain there."



"How in the world does the train ever get over the top?" exclaimed Harry. "It doesn't seem possible that any railway can climb that precipice."

"You'll have a chance to see when ye go over it," chuckled the captain. "It's some road, I tell ye. Caracas is only about six miles from the sea in a straight line, but it's nigh twenty-five miles by the railroad over yonder cliff."

"Caracas must be 'way up in the air if it's on top of that mountain," said Paul. "Isn't it rainy and windy up there?"

The captain gave a hearty laugh. "Lor' bless ye," he cried. "The capital's not *on* the cliff; it's in as snug a valley as ye'd wish to see on t'other side. 'Bout three thousand feet above the sea and finest climate in the world—just like spring all the year 'round."

"You said pirates once went over those mountains and sacked Caracas," remarked Harry. "How did they get over without the railroad?"

“Climbed over by trail,” replied the captain. “Mule-trains and folks come over the old road still. Went over it myself once, afore the steam road was built,—’twasn’t finished ’til 1883.”

“Is it a difficult trail?” asked Mr. Rogers.

“Well, I dunno as some of the folks that spend their spare time a climbing mountains for sport would call it hard; but I’d go all my life without seeing Caracas or any other spot afore I’d hike over that trail again. I’m a-getting too old and too fat for such humbuggin’. They’ve been a-fixing of the road up lately, I believe, and I’ve heard it’s good enough for carriages and automobiles now.”

The “Cormorant” was now close to the port and the mighty cliff seemed actually to be on the point of toppling over on the yacht. Presently they rounded the end of the great concrete breakwater and entered the harbor. The boys were greatly surprised at the size of the anchorage as from the sea the breakwater had blended with the shore-line and gave no hint of the great area of water it protected.

“Whew! that is a big dock!” cried Paul. “How long is it?”

“About half a mile,” replied the captain. “I can tell ye quite a bit ’bout this breakwater ’cause I had a friend who was a contractor and helped build it. It’s fifty feet wide at the bottom and thirty at the top. The outer end’s in 42 feet of water,

with an average depth of 27 feet, and it sticks out of water for 18 feet. The bottom's built of bags of concrete, weighing 150 tons each, piled up to nine feet from the water-line. It cost five million dollars and was finished in 1891."

"It must have proved of great benefit to the port," remarked Mr. Rogers. "There seems to be no natural harbor here."

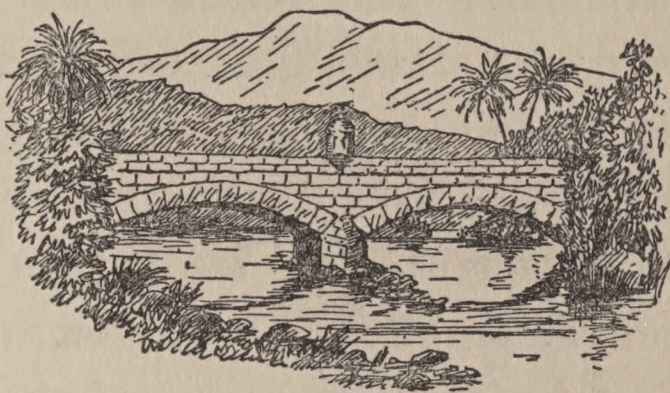
"Just an open roadstead," said the captain. "Afore the breakwater was built 'twas one of the most dangerous anchorages on the coast. Calm as a millpond here now. You see the wind most always blows from the nor'east, so nothing's needed to the west'ard; 'specially as the point yonder cuts off any seas there may be."

The "Cormorant" had now run in close to the extensive concrete and iron docks and dropped anchor in four fathoms of water, which the captain said was the average depth of the harbor.

"Well, here we be," he remarked as the sails were furled and the yacht swung motionless before the town. "Soon's as the customs and health chaps come aboard we'll hop ashore in Old New Spain."

As they waited for the customs boat the boys found much to interest them. They admired the scenery, were surprised at the number of vessels and amount of business at the docks, and watched a little train as it drew out from the town, rumbled

along the track on the narrow strip of shore and commenced to toil up the mountain side by curves and zigzags. A rambling, ancient-looking, half-fortress-like building back of the town attracted their attention and the captain told them it was the castle mentioned in Kingsley's "Westward Ho."



But while all these things were interesting and the town was filled with color, life, and new and strange sights, yet the great mountain, rising from the palm-fringed beach, dominated everything, and the boys' gaze constantly turned from other scenes to the lofty heights of rock and forest.

The customs and quarantine officers now boarded the yacht and the papers and certificates of vaccination—which the party had wisely obtained from the Venezuelan Consul before leaving New York—were carefully examined.

Everything was found correct and satisfactory and with many bows and flourishes the courteous Venezuelans took their leave.

"There's not much to be seen in the port," said the captain as the party prepared to go ashore, "and I reckon we'd better take the train to Caracas

first thing. We can have a bit of a stroll about La Guaira when we come back."

A few minutes later they stepped ashore on the splendid passenger pier, passed through the covered warehouses and reached the railway station. A train was standing on the track about to start and the captain had barely time to secure tickets and hustle the boys aboard before the whistle tooted, the powerful little locomotive puffed and snorted and the train rumbled through the outskirts of the town towards Caracas and the mountain top.

CHAPTER X

IN OLD NEW SPAIN

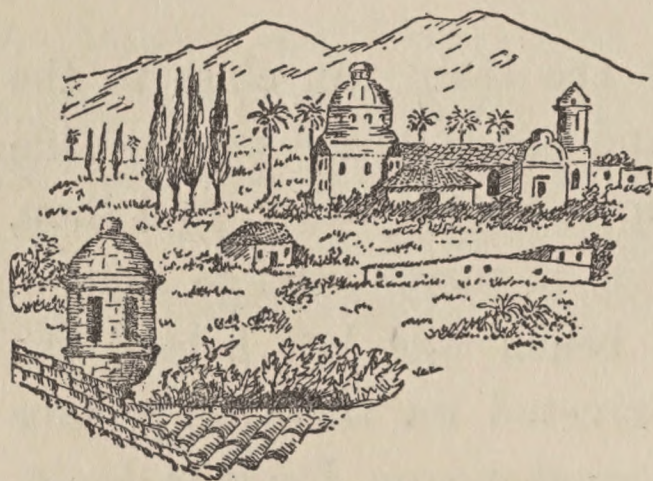
For a short distance the train ran close to the shore, the blue water and sandy beach on one side and the frowning precipice on the other, and then, swinging around a curve, it commenced to ascend. From the moment the beach was left behind the boys kept their eyes riveted on their marvelous surroundings, and with good reason, for it is doubtful if anywhere else on earth one can enjoy a more wonderful ride than that from La Guaira to Caracas.

Much to the boys' surprise there were numerous stations on the line, the first and lowest being Maiquetia, almost at sea level, the highest Catia, 3,135 feet above the shore. From Maiquetia the real ascent began and the road turned and twisted upward until it plunged into the solid rock at Tunnel No. 1, over six hundred feet above the sea.

As the train crawled along the mountain side the boys looked downward to the beach and waves directly below, and upon the quaint, red-roofed buildings of La Guaira with its docks and vessels

looking like mere specks upon the water of the harbor.

Onward and upward wound the road, crossing slender, cobweb-like trestles over terrible ravines, roaring over stone culverts across barrancas and water courses, and plunging into the stygian black-



ness of tunnels. In places it was hung by slender girders and cables from the face of the cliff, in other spots the right of way was cut deep into the precipitous

wall. Often, as the boys looked ahead, the road appeared to run off into space, but as the train reached the spot it would swing dizzily about some jutting cliff in a horseshoe curve or hairpin turn and again resume its ever-upward climb. In many places the boys could look from the windows for a sheer thousand feet into the sea and several times they gazed straight down upon the tracks over which they had just passed.

“It’s like a puppy chasing its tail,” laughed Paul as in one spot the train swung around a sharp, inclined curve and the locomotive was almost above the last car.

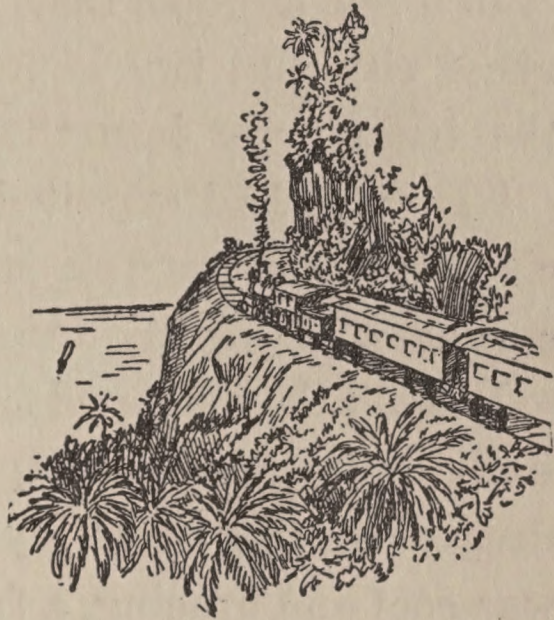
“It’s the most remarkable piece of engineering

I've ever seen," said Mr. Rogers. "How many tunnels and bridges are on the line, captain?"

"Ten bridges and eight tunnels," replied the captain.

"I'm surprised that the locomotive seems to have so little difficulty in hauling the train," said Mr. Rogers. "The grades cannot be very great."

"Four per cent maximum," replied the captain. "We're pretty nigh the top," he continued; "look ahead, lads, for your first glimpse of Caracas."



Presently the sea was hidden from view, the train slipped rapidly around a curve and the boys, looking back, saw hills rising behind them.

Onward through woods and verdure, past orchards and cultivated lands they rushed; now crossing a foaming stream; again passing tiny, wattled huts or small villages, until suddenly, with a shriek of the whistle, the train burst from a screen of foliage and Caracas was spread before them.

Surrounded on every side by lofty, green-clothed mountains the town lay bathed in brilliant sunshine

in the center of a great bowl-like valley nearly ten miles long and five miles wide.

“It’s like a gigantic red poppy in a green lawn,” exclaimed Paul and while the others laughed at his queer comparison they were compelled to admit it was very appropriate.

In a few minutes they were in the outskirts of the great city and two hours after leaving La Guaira the train drew into the Caracas station.

The boys had expected to find a picturesque, ancient city with narrow streets, old world nooks and corners and queerly-dressed natives.

Instead they stepped from the station into a splendidly-built, modern city among men and women dressed in the latest styles and fashions. The air was cool and bracing, a fresh wind was blowing, and the visitors could scarcely believe they were still in the tropics and less than 700 miles from the equator.

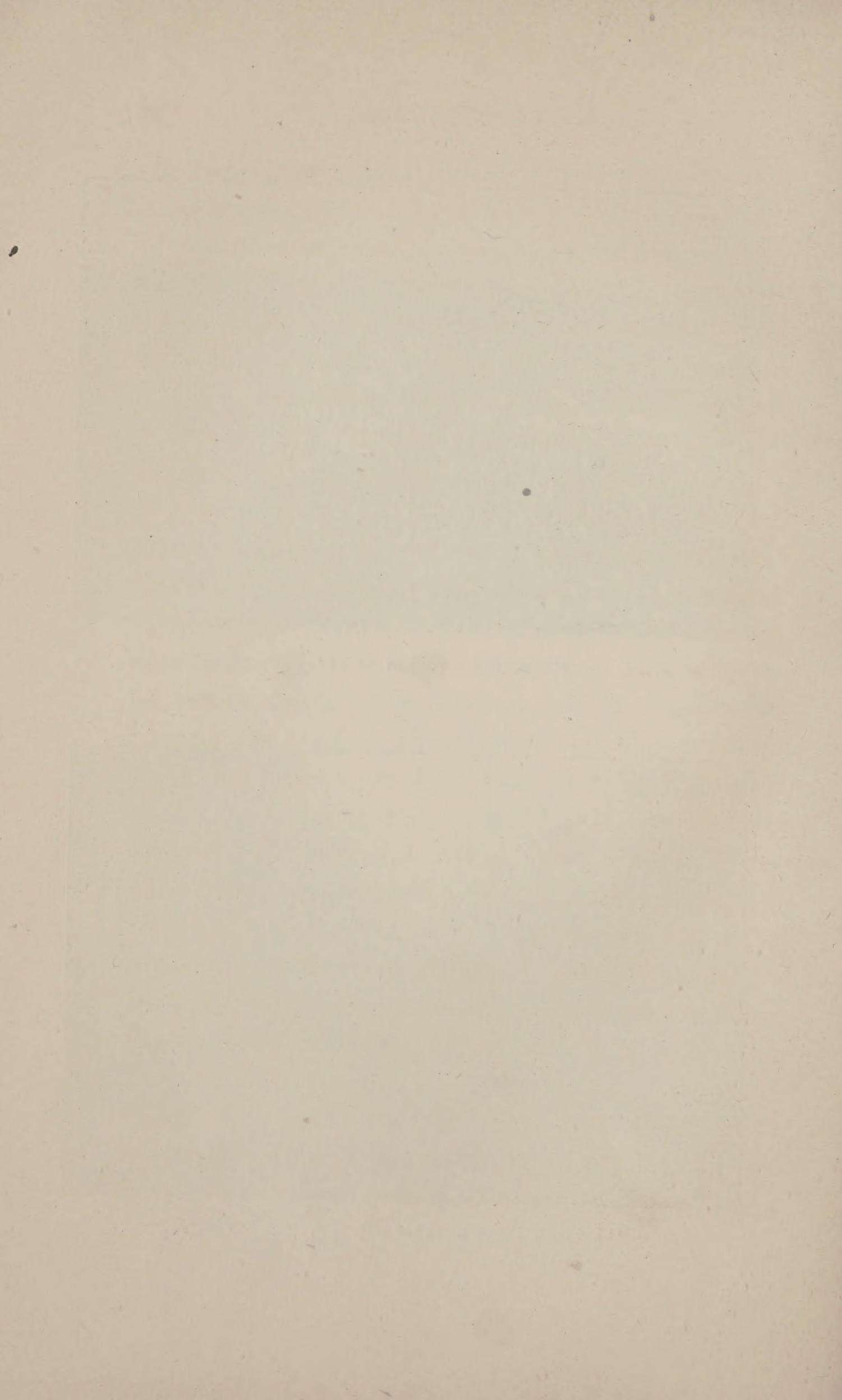
Trolley cars clanged along the broad, paved street, rows of waiting taxis and cabs lined the sidewalks waiting for fares, carriages, automobiles and pedestrians passed in a constant stream and all preconceived ideas of Spanish America were thrown aside as the boys stood at the portals of Venezuela’s capital and waited for the captain to bargain with a cab driver for their sight-seeing tour about the town.



Caracas lay spread before them.



“I think those avenues are fine,” said Harry.



Seated within the Victoria they drove slowly through the streets, which the boys found were wide, straight and smoothly paved towards the center of the city.

"Everything seems up-to-date and modern here," remarked Paul. "I thought the Venezuelans were backward and always having revolutions."

"Seeing's believing," laughed the captain. "They do scrap a bit now and then, but on the whole they're a mighty nice lot of folks."

"One would have little difficulty in getting about in Caracas," remarked Mr. Rogers. "I notice all the streets cross at right angles and are numbered."

"Run east and west and north and south," said the captain. "Caracas was pretty nigh destroyed by earthquake back in 1812, but ye'd never know it now. These folks are mighty proud of their capital."

"They have good reason," declared Mr. Rogers. "I've never seen a more attractive city of its size. How many inhabitants are there?"

"About 100,000," replied the captain. "Ranks ninth among the Spanish American capitals in size, but along of the top of the bunch for business and being up-to-date."

"I think these avenues are fine," exclaimed Harry. "They're all so well kept with their trees and flower-beds and little plazas."

"Why, here's a river flowing right through the city," cried Paul.

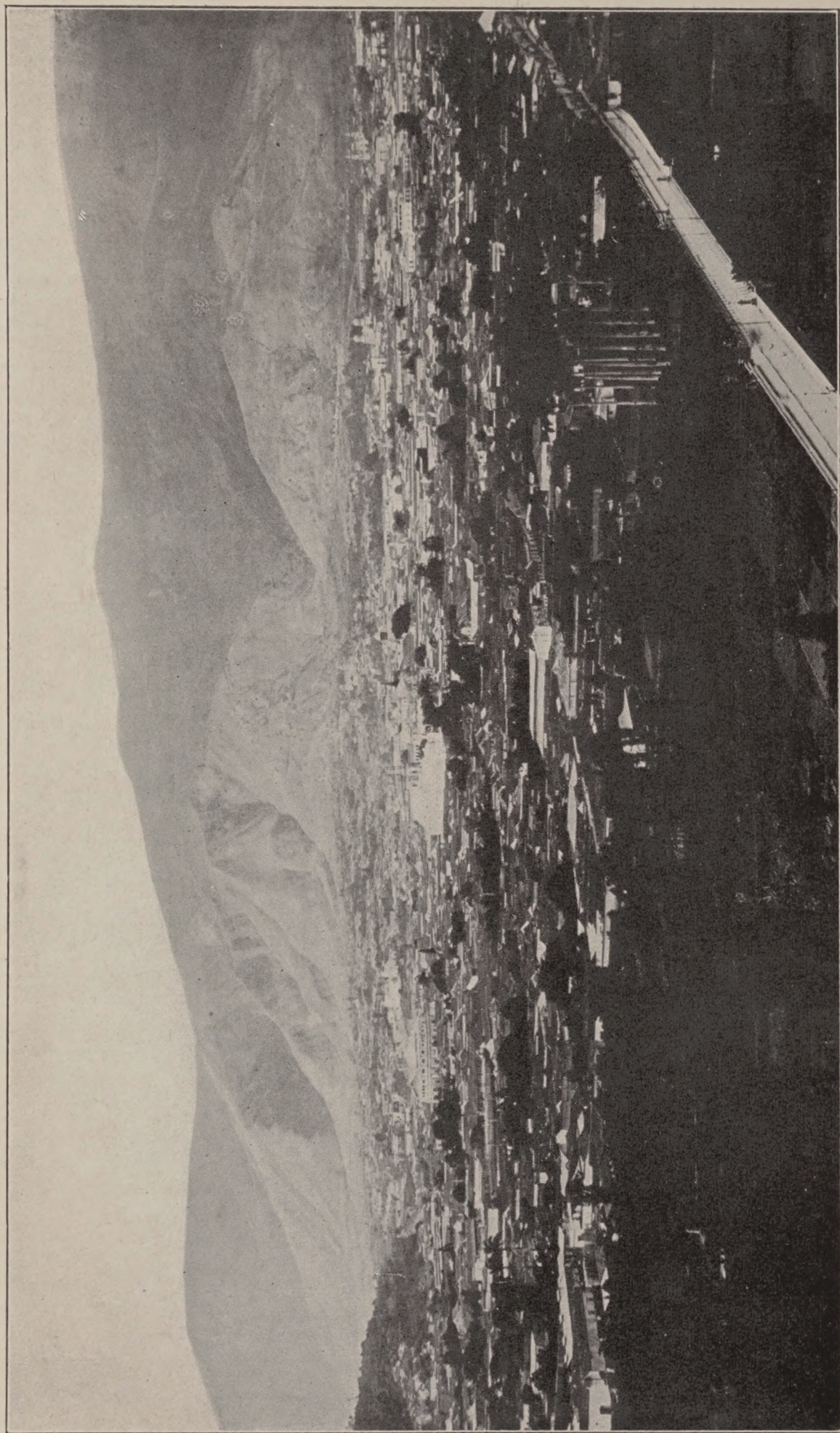
"Three of 'em flow through the town," said the captain. "They're called Caroata, Catuche and Anauco, and they join and form the Guaire that marks the boundary of the city to the south. Here we be at the Plaza Bolivar. Let's hop out and stretch our legs a bit."

The boys found this plaza a most attractive spot with the great bronze equestrian statue of the liberator in the center, the beds of gay flowers, the shady trees and the splendid buildings on all sides of the square. The captain pointed out the great cathedral on the northeast with the Post Office and Library to the northwest, the municipal building, jail and Archbishop's palace to the south and the "Casa Amarilla" to the west.

"That's the 'White House' of Venezuela," he explained, "'ceptin' it's yellor; that's what 'Casa Amarilla' means—'Yaller House.' We'll step over there and have a look at it. It's worth seeing.

"Now I'll show ye something that'll make ye think of home," chuckled the captain when they had visited the various interesting buildings about the plaza.

A short drive brought them to another fine plaza and as the boys caught sight of the statue in its center they uttered exclamations of surprise.



Surrounded by mountains, the town lay bathed in sunshine.

“Why, that’s George Washington,” exclaimed Harry. “What’s he doing down here in Venezuela?”

The captain laughed. “Told ye I’d show ye something that would make ye think of home,” he cried.

“Washington’s just about as big a favorite down here as old Bolivar. One of them’s father of the United States of America and t’other’s the father of the United States of Venezuela—and about half the rest of South America besides. Now I’ll show ye a chap who knew Washington and helped Uncle Sam lick the British.”

The next stop was at a little plaza before a large church-like building.

“Here’s the chap,” announced the captain, pointing to a statue in the plaza. “It’s General Miranda. Born right here in Caracas, but his name’s on the Arch of Triumph in Paris and he fought ’longside of Lafayette in the Revolutionary War. This ’ere building’s the ‘Pantheon’,” he continued. “We’ll step inside and see Bolivar’s tomb.”

Within the building the first sight that greeted the visitors was a magnificent piece of sculpture representing Bolivar and flanked by figures symbolical of Justice and Innocence and guarded by a crouching lion.

“Bolivar’s remains are in that monument,” explained the captain, “and in the three naves about the sides are the bones of Paez and other prominent

Venezuelans. Bolivar's sword, uniforms and decorations are in the National Museum over yonder, but we can't see everything and the Capitol's the next on the list."

The boys thought the Capitol the finest building they had seen. Its Spanish-Moorish architecture, large flower- and tree-filled patio and imposing entrances were very attractive and some time was



spent examining the paintings and busts of famous Venezuelans which adorned the large room known as the "Salon Eliptico."

"Now I reckon we'll drive out to the Paseo," said the captain. "It's a mighty pretty spot and sometimes they call it 'El Calvario' or 'The Calvary.' Ye'll have a fine view from there."

Driving through the streets the captain pointed out the Central University, a beautiful Gothic building fronting the Capitol, the Masonic Temple, several fine theaters, the big two-storied market which he said was the finest in America, the telephone building, and many other public buildings of interest.

"There are about forty bridges in the city," he

remarked as they drove over a picturesque structure in the northeastern part of the town. "This is the biggest and yonder's the Paseo or Calvary."

A moment later they entered the park and the boys and Mr. Rogers vowed it magnificent. Everywhere great trees shaded the well-kept avenues that led through shrubbery and flowers, fountains gleamed among the foliage and scores of pedestrians, carriages and automobiles filled the place with life. From the summit of the hill the boys could look upon the entire city and the captain pointed out various spots which they had not before seen.

"That big building yonder's the 'Miraflores' or President's palace," he said. "Yonder's the observatory; that patch of green's the Grand Savana where they have horse races and that big place is the bull-ring."

"I can see a train running across the valley," said Harry. "Does the railroad continue beyond Caracas?"

"Nope," answered the captain; "that's another line. There are three roads a-running out of the capital aside from the one we came on. The Central runs to Petare and Santa Lucia, another goes to El Valle, and the other to Valencia. The last's called the 'Gran Ferrocarril de Venezuela' or in other words the 'Great Railroad of Venezuela,' and it's

pretty nigh as interesting as the one to La Guaira. Has 212 bridges and 86 tunnels and takes ye to Valencia—as pretty a place as ye'll find."

"I presume with so many rivers near at hand Caracas has an excellent water supply," said Mr. Rogers as the party entered the carriage for the return trip.

"Fine!" replied the captain. "It's brought from the Rio Macaraó about fifteen miles away to a reservoir 'top of this hill."

"Whew! It's really getting chilly," exclaimed Harry as the carriage whirled briskly through the outlying streets. "An overcoat wouldn't be bad here after sundown, I should think."

"Ye'd find most of the folks wearin' 'em after nightfall," replied the captain. "It's never real hot here. Highest it ever gets is 82, but it never goes below 48 and usually hangs round 70. Just about perfect, I think."

After dining at a restaurant the party boarded the train for La Guaira and the boys found the down trip over the wonderful road fully as interesting as their ride in the morning.

When they reached La Guaira they found the station filled with a laughing, chattering, good-natured crowd which had just arrived on another train.

"Where are all those people coming from?"

asked Paul. "They look like a lot of excursionists coming home from Coney Island."

"That's about what they are," laughed the captain. "Just in from Macuto, 'bout five miles to the east'ard. Great spot for excursions and picnics. There's a fine beach there, all shut in by stakes set close together to keep the sharks out. 'All the world' goes down there for the bathing, as the natives say. Lots of folks have fine seaside houses there and the Venezuelans call the place the 'Newport of South America.' Pretty nice spot but nothing very interesting."

A few hours in the evening sufficed for the boys to see all the sights of La Guaira, and they boarded the yacht after one of the most enjoyable and interesting days they had ever known.

"Where are we bound for now?" asked Paul, as the "Cormorant" headed out from the harbor at sunrise the next morning.

"Puerto Cabello," replied the captain. "Know what Puerto Cabello means?"

"Well, we've been studying Spanish and trying to pick up what we could of the language," said Harry. "Cabello means 'hair,' so I suppose Puerto Cabello means 'Hair Port'; but I can't see any sense in such a name."

"Well, well," laughed the captain. "Ye're a-getting along fine. Don't wonder the name puzzles

ye though. It's called 'Port of the Hair' 'cause the harbor's that fine and safe that the old Spaniards used to say a ship could be moored there with a hair."

"Is it one of the places attacked by Morgan and other pirates?" asked Paul.



"Yes," replied the captain. "They all took a whack at it, but were mostly driven off. It's a mighty easy place to protect and the old Spaniards built a lot of forts in the harbor to keep off the Dutch pirates who used to come across from Curaçao. They served just as well to fight off others and old Commodore Knowles got a good licking when he tried to take the town with a British fleet.

The last fight atwixt the Venezuelans and the Spaniards in the war of Independence took place at Puerto Cabello in 1823."

As they sailed along the land was in plain sight and the boys found plenty to interest them in watching the lofty mountains, frowning cliffs, sandy coves and little villages of the South American coast.

Just before noon they sighted Puerto Cabello, about sixty miles from La Guaira, and entered the narrow, winding harbor entrance.

"I don't wonder the pirates found it hard work to take this port," remarked Mr. Rogers as the yacht passed close under the ancient forts which crowned the numerous green islands in the harbor. "They must have been compelled to run a veritable gauntlet of cannon."

"It's a beautiful place," said Harry. "These little islands in the blue water and the foreign-looking town in the background make the place seem more like a picture than the real thing."

"It's real enough," laughed the captain. "Puerto Cabello's an important place and does a big business in coffee, cocoa, cotton, tobacco, hides and skins and cabinet and dye woods. It's the shipping port for a lot of the interior."

The last of the islets had now been passed and the "Cormorant" crossed the harbor proper and ran alongside the large concrete dock before the modern and attractive customs house.

A number of large steamships were moored at the docks, which were covered with bales, boxes and barrels of merchandise from every corner of the earth.

"Isn't that a funny-looking man?" whispered Harry. He drew the others' attention to a stocky,

smooth-shaven individual in a black suit with short jacket, red sash, and a peculiarly-shaped hat, who leaned against a nearby post.

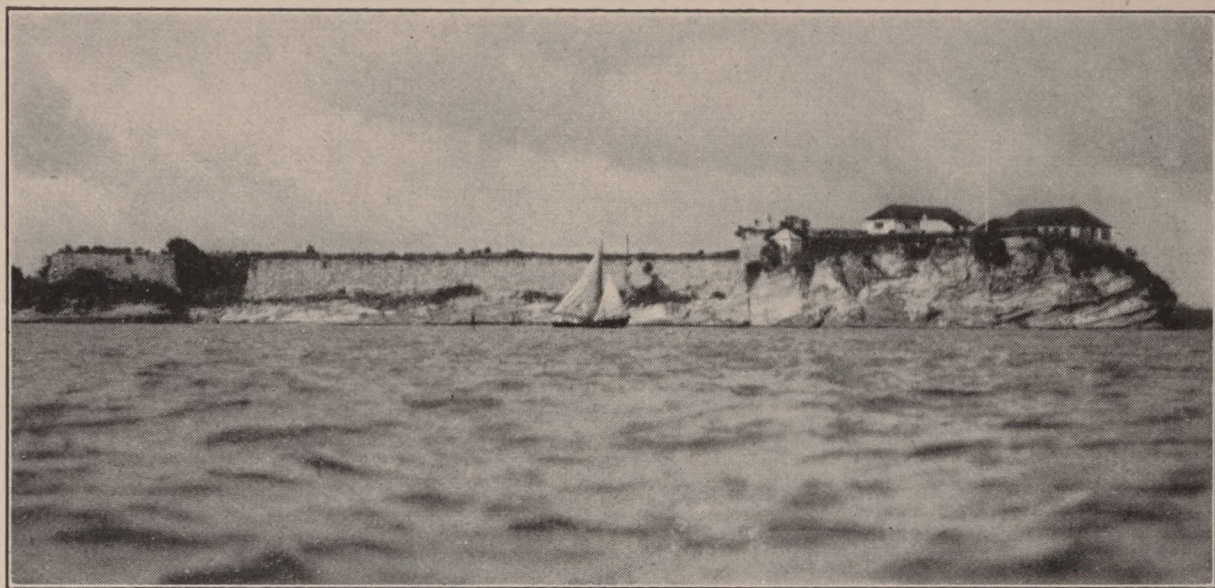
"Why, he's got a pigtail sticking out from under his hat," exclaimed Paul.

"He's a bull-fighter," said the captain. "Probably off that Spanish steamer yonder. There's a lot of 'em here. Come over from Spain and always dress that way and wear little queues. Look there, lads—see the fightin' bulls yonder!" He pointed to the forward deck of the steamer where the boys saw several splendid black bulls confined in wooden stalls.

"Reckon that chap's waiting to see them critters taken off the ship. Might as well stop a bit and see how it's done."

"I don't see how any people can enjoy anything as cruel as a bull-fight," said Paul. "I've got a pretty poor opinion of bull-fighters."

"Well, it's all according to one's bringing up, I reckon," said the captain. "These folks don't think a bull-fight's half as brutal as a football game or a prize-fight. It's pretty tough on the horses for sure; but don't be too hard on the men fighters. It's a risky business and a chap's got to have a heap of nerve and pluck to face one of them critters in the ring. It's no place for cowards. If there's any truth in the old saying that the 'good die young'



The ancient forts on the islands in the harbor.



The modern customs house at Puerto Cabello.

bull-fighting chaps must be awful good—most of 'em die young, all right."

"That fellow leaning against the post doesn't look as if he had life enough to fight anything. He's the picture of ease and indolence," said Mr. Rogers.

"There comes the first bull," cried Harry. "My! but he's a savage-looking creature."

The bull was being led from the stalls, several men holding him with ropes as the great fellow snorted and bellowed, tossed his long, sharp horns, and pawed at the decks.

Suddenly one of the men slipped, the bull plunged forward, the other men were thrown helter-skelter, and with a tremendous bellow the great black animal charged furiously along the decks.

Instantly every man took to his heels. Into the rigging they scrambled, over the sides they leaped, onto the cabins they climbed, seeking safety anywhere and everywhere from the enraged, terrified creature rushing here and there and striving to gore someone on his tossing horns.

In an instant the bull had cleared the decks and stood snorting and shaking his head near the foremast. Without a moment's hesitation the lazy-looking bull-fighter sprang forward. With marvelous agility he leaped over boxes and bundles, tearing off his scarlet sash as he ran, and grabbing up

a coil of rope he rushed up the gangway of the ship.

With eyes fixed steadfastly on the bull he walked calmly forward on the deck; the flaming sash extended in his left hand, the coil of rope in his right. For a brief instant the bull stood motionless, and then with an angry bellow lowered his head and charged straight at the Spaniard.

"O! he'll be killed!" cried Harry.

The words were scarcely uttered when the infuriated animal reached the matador, only to have the latter step nimbly aside and drop the loop of the rope over the sharp horns. With a bound he reached the windlass, whirled the rope around one of the drums and the next instant the bull fell to the deck with a crash, as the rope came taut.

Before the bull could regain his feet the Spaniard was beside him, the sash was wrapped about his head, blindfolding him, while a dozen sailors hurried forward to secure the captured animal.

"Hurrah!" shouted Paul. "That was splendid. I'll take back what I said about bull-fighters."

"It was as good as a 'Wild West Show'," declared Harry.

"I would never have believed the man capable of such skill and agility," said Mr. Rogers.

"A heap better than a regular bull-fight,"

chuckled the captain. "I told ye those chaps had plenty of pluck."

The party now turned toward the town and strolled through its streets, visited its many fine buildings, and admired the lovely plazas and parks. A few hours were sufficient in which to see the most interesting and attractive features and before sun-down the party was again aboard the "Cormorant" and sailing over the blue Caribbean sea with Puerto Cabello a mere speck of white against the green hills far astern.

"We've had a fine time but we haven't found any treasure," remarked Harry. "Where's the next wreck you're going to look for, Cap'n Frank?"

"We're heading for it now," replied the captain. "Over to Oruba. That's a Dutch island 'bout forty miles west of Curaçao. We've got to stop at Curaçao first and get permission to look for the wreck. The Dutch chaps are mighty particular about such matters."

"Uncle Charles told us about Curaçao last winter," said Harry. "That's the place where they speak that funny language—Papa'-something or other he called it."

"Papiamento," said the captain. "Mixture of Dutch, Spanish, Injun and English. Most of the folks talk Spanish and English there nowadays."

"Is Curaçao an interesting spot?" asked Paul.

"Queerest bit of land in the Caribbean," replied the captain. "Looks like a speck of Holland blowed over and dropped down this side of the Atlantic."

CHAPTER XI

AMONG THE LAKE DWELLERS

DAYLIGHT found the "Cormorant" close to the coast of Curaçao and the boys were greatly disappointed at its appearance. It was low and monotonous in outline with a few fairly high hills, but with a dry, arid aspect very different from the verdant islands to which the boys were accustomed.

"I shouldn't think anything would grow there," said Paul. "It's the most barren looking place we've seen yet."

"Nothing of any account's raised there," said the captain. "They raise a few goats, a little fruit, and ship some aloes. The business of Curaçao's commerce; and as it's a free port everything's mighty cheap. There's not a stream on the whole island and I dunno if there's even a well or spring."

"Are there no industries whatever?" asked Harry.

"Yes; there's a whopping big phosphate mine on the south coast," replied the captain. "And smuggling's carried on a bit. A heap of Venezuelan revolutionary chaps come over here to cook up

shenanigans too. And Lor', I most forgot 'bout the publishing business. There's a big book store and publishing company here called the 'libreria.' It belongs to a firm named Betancourt."

"That's the funniest thing I've heard yet," laughed Paul. "Imagine a publishing house here, of all places."

"'Tain't half as funny as some of the sights ye'll see," declared the captain.

"It seems a pretty good-sized island," said Harry. "How large is it, captain?"

"About forty miles long by eight wide."

"Is it very old?" asked Paul.

"Discovered by old Amerigo Vespucci in 1499," replied Captain Perkins. "They say a lot of giants lived here then; but they were all killed off years ago. Yonder's the harbor, lads. Keep your eyes open to see the sights."

The yacht was now approaching a very narrow strait leading directly into the brown hills and presently passed between two ancient forts, so close together that the soldiers of the garrisons could talk across the narrow strip of water.

Ahead of them the boys saw a long, low bridge, or causeway, across the water and seemingly barring the passage of the yacht. Captain Perkins pulled the compressed air siren, the blast echoed and reverberated from the hills about and a moment

later an answering whistle came faintly from within the harbor.

Suddenly the bridge ahead commenced to move and presently it had swung far to one side and open water was visible.

“Why, it’s a bridge of boats and it’s being moved by that little steam-launch,” cried Harry.

“Told ye ’twas a funny place,” chuckled the captain. “Isn’t that bridge the funniest thing o’ the sort ye ever saw?”

The yacht now moved slowly ahead, passed the long line of pontoons which had been pulled to one side to allow her to enter the harbor, and the boys looked with interest at the strange town of Willemstadt. The great landlocked harbor was in the form of a three-leaved clover with the town stretching along the center and right hand side while on the opposite shores was another village.

“Yonder’s Pietermaay and Schardo,” said the captain, indicating the main town to the right. “That on t’other side o’ the bay’s called Otrabanda.”

The yacht came to anchor close to the waterfront and the boys were soon ashore.

“Goodness, what a queer, bright-colored city!” exclaimed Paul. “Everything’s pink and blue and yellow and red.”

“Everything’s thoroughly Dutch,” declared Mr.

Rogers. "See those steep, gabled roofs, dormer windows and quaint ornaments. All it needs is a few storks on the roof-tops."

"Or people with wooden shoes," laughed Harry.

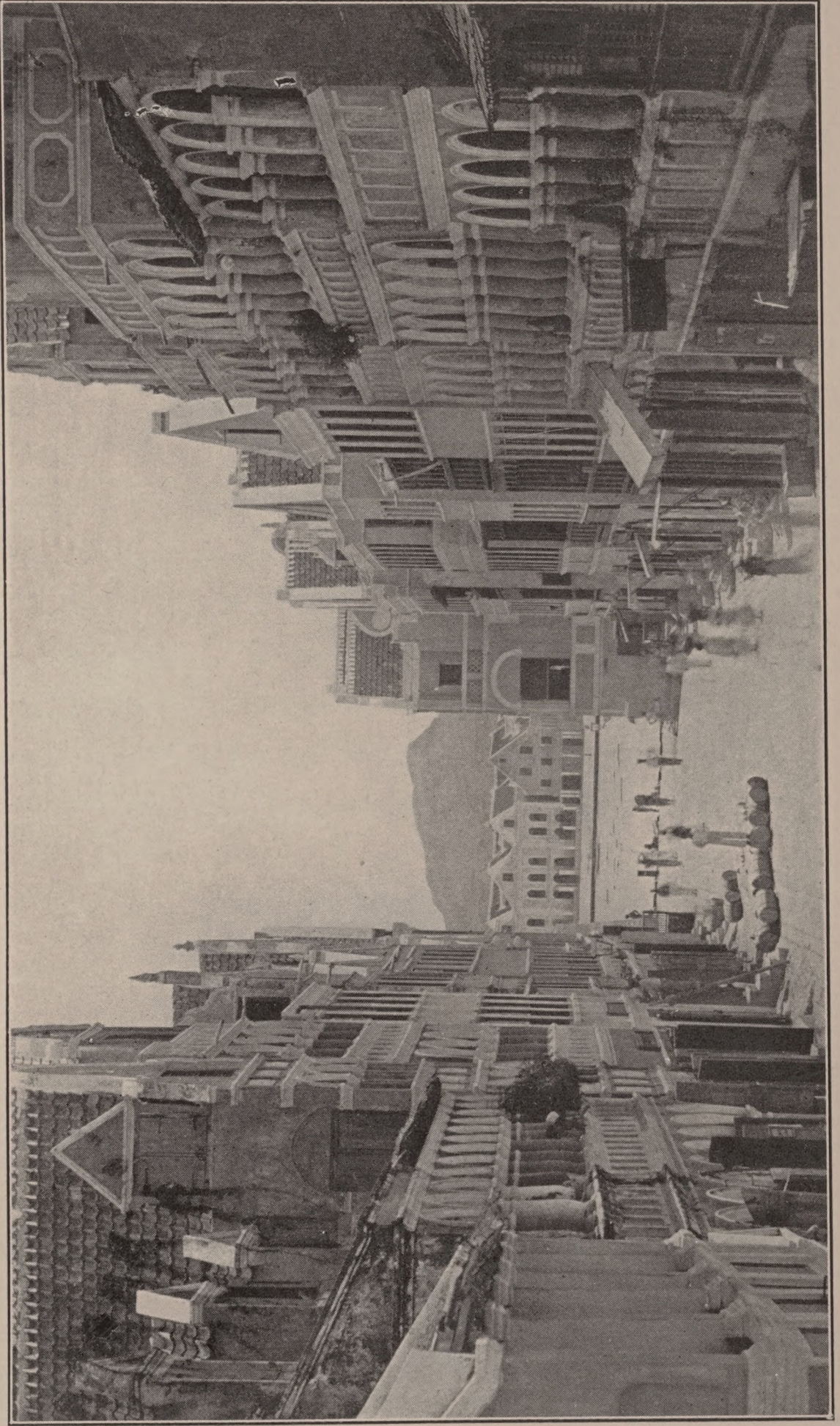
"Oh, what a funny street-car," exclaimed Paul. He pointed to a tiny open car being slowly drawn along the rails by a diminutive donkey.

"We'll just hop in and have a ride," said the captain. "Might as well see all the sights while it's cool."

"Will that little donkey be able to pull all of us?" asked Harry.

The captain roared with laughter at this. "Lor' bless ye, yes," he cried. "Wait till ye see some o' these cars loaded down with big, fat Dutchmen and colored women and then ye'll think this load's just a joke."

The tiny tramcar proceeded so slowly through the streets that the boys had an excellent opportunity to see the buildings, people and sights of the town. Many of the streets were wide and well paved, but many more were mere lanes of rough cobbles and so narrow that the balconies of the houses almost met. The people were of every race and color and chattered and gabbled in their queer dialect and the shops and stores were very numerous and filled with every imaginable article. Presently the tram left the city, skirted the shores of the



Everything is thoroughly Dutch in Curaçao.

harbor, and carried the passengers to the other town across the bay. Here the party alighted, strolled about the quaint Dutch village and the captain then suggested that they cross over by the bridge of boats. As they paid their toll the boys noticed that the gate-keeper looked at their feet before handing back the change.

“That’s to see if you’re barefoot,” laughed the captain. “Two cents each for folks with shoes and one cent for those barefooted.”

The boys thought this very amusing and found the queer bridge very interesting.

“Invented by a chap named Captain Smith,” said the captain. “Regular down-east Yankee from Maine. American Consul here at one time. Made a heap of money bringing down ice. First chap to bring ice to the island.”

“You spoke about pirates from Curaçao attacking Puerto Cabello,” said Harry. “Did they live here?”

“Used to be a great spot for ’em,” replied the captain. “Had a regular lookout; top of a cliff over to the Schattegat; we’ll take a trip over there afore we leave.”

Arriving once more at the capital the party boarded the launch and ran across the harbor to the huge, landlocked lagoon known as the Schattegat. Near the entrance an ancient fort was perched high

on a rocky cliff, and this the captain said was the ancient pirates' watchtower, but was now used as a signal station. The party scrambled up the steep trail to the fort and from that point had a splendid view of the queer, shamrock-shaped harbor, the pretty town, the odd bridge of boats and the sea beyond; with the Venezuelan mountains on the horizon.

"It must have been an ideal pirates' lair," said Mr. Rogers. "I can readily imagine the boats lying in wait, screened by these cliffs, and dashing forth to seize any unfortunate merchantmen sighted from this lofty lookout."

As soon as the party returned to the town the captain visited the government buildings, to secure permission to investigate the wreck which he believed was at Oruba, while the boys and Mr. Rogers strolled about the stores and shops looking for curios and souvenirs.

"Reckon we'll have to cross that wreck off the list, lads," the captain announced when he rejoined the boys. "The Dutchmen say the wreck's not there and if 'twas there we couldn't get permission to salvage it and even if we did the treasure'd belong to the government anyway."

"That's a shame!" exclaimed Paul. "If all the wrecks turn out like these first two there won't be much chance of finding anything."

“Well, if it hadn’t been for the wreck we wouldn’t have come to Curaçao and I’m mighty glad we visited the place,” declared Harry.

“Can’t expect treasure-hunting to be all easy sailing,” laughed the captain. “Besides,” he added, “there’s plenty o’ wrecks left. Let’s be a’getting along toward the next one, lads.”

By mid-afternoon Curaçao was but a blur of haze upon the eastern horizon and when darkness fell the “Cormorant” was safely anchored close to the Paraguana Peninsula in the waters of the Gulf of Maracaibo. The country near the yacht was low and flat, but across the Gulf the boys could see the dim outlines of mountains against the sunset.

“Yonder’s the tip o’ the Andes,” said the captain in reply to the boys’ questions. “’Tother side of the mountains is Colombia. It’s a wild country yonder; Goajiro it’s called and inhabited by wild Injuns.”

“Are there many really wild Indians in Venezuela?” Harry inquired.

“Dunno how many,” replied the captain. “I’ve heard that when the Spaniards first came here there were ’bout 150 tribes. Along o’ 1873 all but 45 tribes had been killed off or mixed up with the whites. There’s still a plenty of wild ones left in the interior; but the chaps over yonder are the only ones hereabouts.”

"There must be good hunting about here," remarked Paul. "I don't see any towns near. I'd love to go for a hunt in the interior jungles."

"Ye may have a chance yet," replied the captain. "After we've run down to Maracaibo to-morrow we'll take a trip into the lake and have a look at the towns on stilts that gave the country its name. Like as not ye'll have a chance to shoot something worth while there. There's heaps o' swamps and lakes on the sou'west shores."

"What are the towns on stilts?" asked Paul. "And how did they give the country its name?" inquired Harry.

"Lake o' Maracaibo was discovered by old Ojeda—you saw his tomb over to San Domingo—and when he saw the Indian houses stuck up on poles in the water it made him think of Venice and he called it Venezuela or Little Venice. Later on the name spread to the whole coast. There's plenty o' the Injuns still a-living in villages on spiles, but they're pretty well civilized now; mostly fishermen."

At daylight the motor was started and the yacht glided rapidly southward across the broad, tranquil Gulf.

"Yonder's about where that wreck is," remarked the captain. He pointed to some low-lying sandy islets with a few cocoanut palms upon them.



Most of the Indians are pretty well civilized.

“Reckon we’ll run in close and have a look afore we make the city,” he added.

The “Cormorant” was anchored off the low, sandy point and the captain with Mr. Rogers and the boys stepped into the dinghy and rowed toward the sand-bars. For an hour or two they searched carefully, but the bottom was only visible in shallow water and nothing could be distinguished at any great depth.

“Might ‘a’ known it,” exclaimed the captain. “Over 500 rivers flow into the lake yonder and the water runs out into the gulf ‘bout six knots an hour. There’s no time for the mud and sand to settle and if there was the old wreck would ‘a’ been covered up with sand years ago. Never thought o’ that ‘til I got here. Joke’s on me this time, lads.” The captain laughed heartily and the party returned to the yacht.

“Is this the only entrance to the lake?” asked Mr. Rogers as the “Cormorant” passed through a narrow waterway less than a mile in width.

“There’s four ‘canals’ as they’re called,” replied the captain. “This one’s the San Carlos and the best of the lot.”

Presently the yacht passed a sandy point covered with cocoanut palms and before them was the city of Maracaibo.

“Why, that’s a big town!” exclaimed Paul in

surprise. "I expected to find just a little village."

"Maracaibo's one o' the most important and progressive places in the country," said the captain. "Population of fifty or sixty thousand and does a whopping big trade."

"What do they raise here?" asked Harry.

"Mostly cattle and cocoanuts," replied Captain



Perkins. "About seventeen million nuts each year, most of 'em made into oil, and 'bout fifty thousand head o' cattle. They make a heap of cheese, too—'bout five million pounds a year. Late years they've been a-raising lots of bananas—ten or eleven million bunches each year."

"It looks like quite a modern town," remarked Mr. Rogers, "but I presume it is very old."

"Founded in 1529 by a Spanish Dutchman—Abraham Alfinger," replied the captain.

The yacht was now close to the town and was soon moored alongside the extensive concrete docks amid

hundreds of other craft of every size, rig and nation.

The customs formalities were soon over and the boys stepped ashore at the Calle de la Marina, which was crowded with pedestrians, diminutive donkeys loaded with merchandise of various kinds, creaking bull carts and mule trains from the interior.



“It’s the most foreign-looking crowd we’ve seen,” said Paul. “Aren’t those mule drivers picturesque? They look like brigands.”

“Oh, look at those skins,” cried Harry. He pointed to a half-breed Indian squatting beside a bundle of tawny, black-spotted hides.

“Why, they’re leopard skins!” exclaimed Paul. “I didn’t know they had leopards down here.”

“Jaguar,” said Mr. Rogers. “Leopards are not found in America.”

“Tiger, the folks here call ’em,” said the captain. “But I reckon you’re right, Rogers.”

“Are they for sale? Where did he get them?” asked Harry. “I’d love to buy one if I can.”

“Easy to find out,” said the captain and approaching the Mestizo he spoke to him in Spanish.

“He says he’ll sell ’em,” said the captain. “Asks

ten dollars apiece. If ye want a couple I'll dicker with him a bit."

"Ten dollars is cheap," said Paul. "I'll gladly pay that for a skin."



"Cheap or not," said the captain, "if that chap asks ten he means five. They always ask twice what they expect to get."

As a result of a little bargaining two fine skins were purchased for fifteen dollars and the boys asked the captain to inquire where and how the native killed the jaguars.

"Back in the bush," said the captain, after a few minutes' conversation. "Says there's plenty of 'em there. Hunts 'em with dogs."

"I'd like to shoot a jaguar," declared Harry.

"I do hope we have a chance."

"Reckon ye'll have to wait till we get to some other place," said the captain. "This chap says it's four days' trip to the place where ye'd be likely to find 'em."

The party now walked up a well-paved, wide street towards the center of the town, passing between solid, well-built buildings, large warehouses and busy stores. Electric lights, telephone wires

and a steam tramway were noticed, as well as the splendid Baralt theater, the Municipal Palace, the Government Palace and several hotels.

“That’s the National College,” said the captain, as they stopped to look at a fine building. “They’re great on education here,” he continued. “Medical school, half a dozen colleges, a big library and heaps o’ schools.”

The Post Office, custom house, hospitals and public market were all visited and the party then seated themselves for a short rest in a beautiful plaza known as Lake Park. Here the boys’ attention was at once attracted by the monument to Columbus with the bust of the discoverer surmounting an immense globe representing the world and with the hemispheres, countries, islands and other details very carefully and accurately shown.

As the air became decidedly hot toward midday and as all the sights of the city had been seen the captain suggested they run into Lake Maracaibo.

Accordingly they boarded the yacht and passing through the shallow Tablazo canal entered the great lake.

“It looks like the ocean,” said Paul. “I’d never think this was a lake.”

“Pretty good sized one,” laughed the captain. “Something over a hundred miles long and pretty nigh as wide.”

For several hours the "Cormorant" sailed along the western edge of the lake, passing mile after mile of cocoanut groves, broad plantations of bananas, patches of jungle, and grassy savannas.

Gradually the cultivated lands grew less, the forest growths increased, and the mouths of many rivers and creeks were seen.



"Oh, there's a flock of parrots," cried Harry as with loud, harsh cries a number of green birds passed close to the yacht and settled among the trees on the shore.

"Do run in and let us have a closer view of them, captain," begged Paul.

"All right, lad," chuckled the captain. "Ye'll see a plenty of parrots and paroquets anywhere in the bush down here. Look yonder and ye'll see some macaws."

He pointed to a tall palm and the boys exclaimed in admiration as they saw the huge red and blue birds moving about among the leaves and feeding on the seeds.

The parrots and macaws showed no fear of the yacht as it slipped into the little creek near them and the boys had a splendid view of the brilliantly plumaged creatures in their native haunts.

"There's a toucan," Harry suddenly exclaimed. "See, right on that low tree."

“That’s so,” said Mr. Rogers. “This appears to be a paradise for birds.”

“Oh, there’s a whole flock of them!” cried Paul, who was studying the foliage through his glasses. “Goodness, aren’t they queer-looking creatures.”

Suddenly and without apparent reason the birds took wing with loud, hoarse cries and the boys caught sight of something furry and brown among the foliage.



“It’s a monkey,” cried Paul.

“There’s another and another,” cried Harry excitedly.

The captain almost choked with suppressed laughter.

“Well, well, well!” he exclaimed. “Who’d ’a’ thought you lads would ’a’ been so tickled to see a bunch o’ monkeys and a flock o’ birds. Lor’ bless ye, the woods are full of ’em down here.”

“But they’re so tame,” said Harry. “They don’t seem to mind the sound of our voices at all. Those we saw in St. Kitts were as wild as hawks.”

“Those are hunted while these, I presume, are not molested,” remarked Mr. Rogers.

“That’s the idea,” said the captain. “No one hunts these chaps. They’re white-faced critters.

The folk hunt the red ones for food; but these are no use."

The monkeys were jumping and leaping about in the trees and the boys watched them with the greatest interest until the active creatures trooped out of sight among the foliage.



As the boat sailed onward along the shores the boys watched the trees and brush closely, eager to catch a glimpse of birds and beasts, and they were well rewarded for their trouble. Parrots, paroquets, macaws, toucans and herons were abundant; several monkeys were seen

and brilliantly colored small birds were everywhere.

"Look, look," Harry suddenly exclaimed. "There's a house on stilts."

"Right ye are," said the captain as everyone looked where the boy pointed. "Fisherman's house. See his net just beyond? There's the chap now a-catching fish with a hand-net."

The boys also saw the fisherman, a swarthy Mestizo, standing in the shallow water with a huge, round net in his hands. They watched him as they passed and the fellow looked up and called a "*Buenas Dias*" to those on the yacht.



Harry exclaimed, "There's a house on stilts."



The boys saw the fisherman standing in the water.

“Used to be a village just ’round that point yonder,” remarked the captain. “Dunno as it’s there yet. Yes, there ’tis.”

The yacht had now rounded the point and the boys saw the quaint village of the lake dwellers before them.

The little thatched houses on platforms raised above the water on posts were quaint and interesting, but the boys were far more interested in the people, who looked with curiosity at the yacht and in their little dug-out canoes were soon flocking all about the anchored “Cormorant.” They were copper-skinned, straight-haired, and evidently Indians, but were dressed in cotton and linen clothes, wore Panama hats and seemed decidedly civilized. They chatted, laughed and shouted to the boys in Spanish and held forth bunches of fruit, fresh fish and live birds and monkeys for sale.

“Where *do* they get fruit?” asked Harry. “They certainly can’t raise it out here in the water.”

“They’ve got gardens back on shore,” replied the captain. “Dunno why they live on the water. Kind o’ inherited the trick from their ancestors, I reckon.”

“Ask how much those parrots are, please,” said Harry. “I’d like to buy one.”

“Good chance to try Spanish yourself,” chuckled

the captain. "You've been a learning it. Ask the chaps and see if they'll understand ye."

"Good idea," agreed Mr. Rogers. "Practice makes perfect, you know. This is a good chance to practice."

"All right," laughed Harry. "I'll try."



Turning toward a boatman, whose canoe-rail was lined with parrots and toucans, he addressed the fellow in halting, newly-acquired Spanish.

Instantly the fellow's face brightened. "*Un peso!*" he cried, holding up a parrot. "*Muy manso y joven! Puede habla bien!*"

"Hurrah, he did understand!" cried the delighted boy. "He says they're one dollar and very young and tame and can talk well."

"Bully for you!" cried the captain, slapping

Harry on the back. "Afore ye get home ye'll be a-gabbling away in Spanish better than I can."

Now that Harry found he could make himself understood, Paul tried and was as pleased as his cousin with his success and soon, without the captain's help, the boys had purchased a couple of parrots, several paroquets and a toucan.

While they were busy with the bird-sellers a canoe, containing several half-naked men, arrived, and as it drew near the boys' attention was attracted to an object being towed behind the boat.

"That's a sea-cow," said the captain in reply to the boys' eager questions. "Manatee's the proper name for the critter. Natives think a heap of 'em for food and the hide's worth considerable."

"How do they kill them?" asked Paul.

"Sometimes they net 'em, but most generally they spear 'em. Like to go on a sea-cow hunt? Reckon we can get these chaps to take us along if ye want."

"That would be fine!" cried Harry. "Do try and get them to take us."

Calling to the manatee-hunters the captain held a short conversation with them, little of which the boys could understand.

"It's all right," announced the captain at last. "He says it's too late to-day, but if we'll stop here over night he'll take us on a hunt first thing in the morning."

"Shall we take our guns along?" asked Paul.

"Ye won't need 'em for manatee," replied the captain. "But maybe ye'll get a sight of something else. I'll just ask this lad and see if there's any hunting about."



"Reckon we struck just the right spot for a bit o' sport," said the captain after another conference with the native. "José yonder says he can take ye into the bush along the river and ye'll likely get a shot at a 'danta' or maybe at a 'zorro'."

"What are 'dantas' and 'zorros'?" asked Harry. "I never heard of them before."

"Danta's another name for tapir," replied the captain. "The 'zorro's' a kind of wild cat—ocelot, I believe's the proper name for 'em."

"Hurrah!" shouted the boys. "We'll have a fine time. Won't we have a story to tell when we go home? Going hunting with real Indians in the South American jungles."

"What do you say to taking the dinghy and running alongshore and trying to get a few ducks for

supper," suggested the captain. "Roast duck'll taste pretty good," he added.

Water-fowl were abundant in a neighboring swamp, the natives said, and in less than two hours the boys secured enough ducks for a meal. These were turned over to Rami and the party then spent an interesting hour visiting the strange village near at hand.

They found the natives pleasant, courteous and hospitable, but living very simple lives, and the boys were greatly amused when in some of the houses they found the wattled walls plastered with pages from illustrated magazines and the gay-colored comic supplements of Sunday newspapers.

"That's the most incongruous sight I've ever seen," declared Mr. Rogers.

"Old Ojeda'd be a bit surprised to drop in and see such things, I'll wager," said the captain with a hearty laugh. "These chaps know a good thing when they see it, even if they do go on living in houses on stilts. Just look yonder." He pointed to a shelf in one of the huts.

"Well, of all things!" exclaimed Paul. "That's an alarm clock."

It was perfectly true; a nickel alarm clock was ticking merrily in the lake-dweller's home.

CHAPTER XII

HARRY'S ADVENTURE

It was still dark when the boys were aroused by the captain, who told them that José and the manatee hunters were alongside the yacht.

Early as it was, Rami had a steaming pot of coffee, hot muffins and fried fresh fish ready, and the



boys, after eating a hearty, though hasty, breakfast, felt ready for anything.

As the big dug-out canoe was paddled

rapidly through the morning mist that hung above the calm water of the lake countless sounds of awakening life issued from the jungle-covered shore a few rods away. Screams of macaws, the strange, half-human notes of parrots, the hoarse croaks of ibis and herons mingled with the whistles, songs and calls of other birds, while the chattering of monkeys, the occasional splash of leaping fish or plunging turtles and the grunt of a wild pig added to the strange noises which proved the abundance of wild life all about.

Presently the canoe entered a narrow channel or creek with close-growing vegetation on either hand. The boys were quite excited over the many strange birds which perched in the trees, swam or waded in the water or flew overhead, but at a signal from one of the Indians ceased their chatter and maintained an absolute silence.



Soon the banks receded and the canoe shot out upon a small pond or lagoon surrounded by mangroves and giant rushes.

Suddenly José, who had been peering intently about, pointed to the water near at hand and the boys, following his gesture, noticed a number of pieces of water-weeds floating on the surface—an indication, they were told later, that a manatee was feeding on the bottom.

Instantly the Indians ceased paddling and the canoe rested motionless upon the glassy water.

Some minutes passed in silence and then from a little cove among the trees ahead there was a great splash and a loud bull-like bellow followed by a hissing, as of escaping steam. The boys gave an involuntary start at the strange sounds and at the same instant the paddles struck the water and the canoe

shot forward into the cove, for the Indians knew that the noise was made by a manatee as he came up to "blow."

As the boys came within sight of the waters of the cove a widening ripple wrinkled its surface and while the men urged the canoe forward with slow and cautious strokes of their paddles José rose in



the bow and stood with poised spear scanning the water. Everywhere bits of water-weed were floating on the surface and presently José raised his hand. At the signal the paddles ceased

moving and the canoe glided forward, and looking ahead the boys saw little silvery bubbles floating on the dark water. As the bow of the canoe reached these the long-handled spear of the hunter flashed down and buried half its length beneath the surface. With one accord the Indians backed water furiously, while José rapidly uncoiled and tossed overboard the light "bush rope" attached to the harpoon. Hardly was the forward motion of the canoe checked when the spear-haft projecting from the water sprang forward as if endowed with life. For a few yards it rushed onward, and then, the line coming taut, it bent like a bow; the rope snapped from the water

with a humming twang and the light canoe jerked forward a dozen feet, almost throwing the boys from their seats. For several minutes the canoe rushed through the water, drawn this way and that by the stricken manatee. Then the line slackened and instantly the men commenced dragging it in.

"They've got him!" exclaimed Harry. "My, but didn't he make things hum!"

Both boys half rose to catch the first sight of the quarry when it was hauled in, when suddenly, with a bellow and splash, the creature broke from the water within six inches of the boat and, with a mighty hiss, again sank out of sight.

The two boys tumbled head over heels into the bottom of the canoe at the unexpected apparition, and almost upset the frail craft, and both joined in the laughter of the Indians at their momentary fright. The canoe was now being towed forward once more by the manatee, but the speed steadily lessened, and each time the line slackened the sea-cow was drawn closer to the boat. In half an hour from the time he was first struck the big creature had become exhausted with his struggles. He was drawn alongside the canoe, and was quickly and mercifully killed.

"My, but he *is* a big beast," said Paul, as the boys examined the huge amphibious creature.

"Pretty nigh eight foot long. Reckon he'll weigh

four or five hundred pounds," commented the captain.

"Are they good to eat?" asked Harry.

"Fine," declared the captain. "Some parts of the critters taste like pork, other parts like beef and some parts just like fish. We'll have a bit cooked aboard the yacht, so you lads can say ye've



eaten sea-cow. The 'ile's worth a heap, too, and the hides bring good money.

Some o' the bones are hard as ivory, and altogether a sea-cow's a pretty good catch for these folks."

"It was certainly exciting while he towed us about," said Paul. "Are they going to try for another?"

"José says it's no use," replied the captain, after a short conversation with the hunter. "Says as how every sea-cow hereabouts will 'a' been scared off by the blood and racket of this chap. If you'd like to go on a bit of a hunt, he says he'll tie this cow to the shore and take ye up the creek to some bush where we'll likely find game."

The boys were highly elated at this, and as soon as the manatee had been towed close to the shore and safely secured to a tree the canoe was headed up one of the many small creeks that led inland from the lagoon.

For a mile or two they followed the stream, winding back and forth, twisting and turning, through a perfect labyrinth of channels bordered by swamps overgrown with mangroves, vast stretches of grass and rushes, and masses of strange, broad-leaved water-plants. Water-fowl of many species were seen; turtles sunned themselves on tree-trunks and logs; a crab-eating opossum scrambled up from the edge of the water to stare at the passing canoe, and once the boys caught a glimpse of a big creature which looked like a giant guinea-pig, and which the natives said was a "paca."



Gradually the banks became less swampy; mangroves gave way to palmettoes, cedars and various forest trees; the shores became firm and dry, and, at last, running the canoe onto a sandy beach, José announced that they had reached the right spot for a hunt.

After a short consultation it was decided that the two boys should separate, each accompanied by one of the Indians, while the captain remained at the canoe, as he declared he was too fat and too easily "winded" to go hunting through the bush.

Although the boys knew but very little Spanish, yet they could speak and understand enough to serve their purpose they felt sure, and in high spirits they

stepped off into the jungle with their native companions.

José accompanied Harry, and led him rapidly into the bush, peering intently on every side, and frequently stooping to examine tracks in the soft earth. For some time the two pressed onward, seeing nothing but birds, an occasional monkey, and a little troop of coatis, which interested Harry greatly.

Suddenly, as they crossed a tiny open space near a small stream, José grasped Harry's arm and pointed to a queer imprint in the damp soil.

"Danta," he whispered.

Carefully examining the track of the tapir, he then pointed to the dense growth of cane and grass which bordered the stream, and indicated that the tapir was within it. A narrow trail of broken and trampled canes indicated where some creature had passed through the brake, and by simple words and signs José told Harry to proceed slowly along this trail, while he (José) entered at another spot and endeavored to drive the "danta" toward the boy.

Following these directions, Harry stepped into the runway, with gun ready, and moved silently and cautiously along, while a short distance to the right he could hear José crashing through the thick growth.

Presently the sounds of the Indian's passage grew faint and indistinct, and the silence of the canebrake

was only broken by the faint chirp of insects and the rustling of lizards among the dead reeds.

Coming to a small open space, Harry noticed a number of footprints in the trail and stopped to examine them. He was bending forward, looking intently at the tracks, when he was startled by a tremendous crash among the canes behind him.



Whirling about, he was just in time to see a huge black head, with tiny wicked eyes, stiff, bristling mane and long wrinkled snout, burst through the jungle within a yard of where he stood. To the startled boy the creature seemed as big as an elephant, and involuntarily he gave a little cry. The tapir, intent on escaping from José in his rear, was rushing blindly forward, and became still more terrified when he caught sight of Harry and heard his cry of surprise and alarm. Instantly the frightened creature tried to stop and turn back, but the ground

was soft and slippery, and in trying to check himself the big beast slid forward, stumbled, plunged full into Harry, and together the frenzied tapir and an equally frightened boy rolled head over heels in the mud and grass. Almost instantly the tapir regained its feet, and, snorting loudly, dashed off through the brake, while Harry rose from the muck and roared with laughter at his odd adventure as he wiped the mud from his face and clothes.

A moment later José appeared, and while Harry could not well explain what had occurred, the Indian's quick eyes took in the surroundings at a glance, and he laughed as heartily as Harry when he realized how the hunted had actually knocked down the hunter and had escaped.

José then led Harry around the canebrake toward a low ridge or hill, covered with thick brush and with a patch of forest beyond. An old abandoned road led up the slope, and turning a sharp curve in this path, Harry, who was some distance ahead, caught a glimpse of a large dark animal as it disappeared in the brush. Instantly the boy threw his rifle to his shoulder and fired. A scream of rage followed the report, and José, hurrying up, cried excitedly: "Tigre, tigre!"

The shot had evidently missed, for the crashing of the brush showed the animal was dashing toward the forest, and Harry, jumping upon a fallen tree,

fired shot after shot into the growth, where it swayed and moved as the creature leaped through it.

José was examining the spot where Harry had first caught sight of the animal, and now called to the boy and pointed to great footprints in the soft earth and to a few drops of blood near the edge of the brush. Realizing that he had wounded the creature, and unable to grasp but little of the rapid, excited volley of Spanish from José, Harry pushed forward through the jungle with the Indian at his heels.

The broken branches, drops of blood and an occasional footprint, made the trail of the wounded animal easy to follow; but when the edge of the woods was reached all traces were lost, and Harry looked to right and left, while José stooped close and scrutinized the hard earth for signs of footmarks. Suddenly a bit of bark dropped from overhead, and Harry glanced up quickly. As he did so he gave a little gasp, his knees trembled, and the hair tingled on his scalp. He had good reason to be frightened, for upon a horizontal limb, within a dozen yards of where he stood, crouched a lithe, dark form, with gleaming yellow-green eyes, and great white teeth bared in a savage snarl. For a brief instant Harry's blood seemed frozen in his veins, and he stared motionless at the ferocious creature above him. Then, as the tail of the great cat twitched and the muscles

rippled under the satin-like skin, the spell was broken, and with a single motion the boy raised his rifle and fired.

Even as he pulled the trigger Harry saw the creature spring, and instinctively he threw himself to one side. The report of the rifle, a warning yell from José, and an unearthly scream rang simultaneously in the boy's ears as he tripped and fell sprawling over a projecting root. Quickly he sprang to his feet, grabbed up his rifle and whirled about, but all danger was past; the great black creature was stretched lifeless upon the earth, and about it José danced and shouted as if bereft of his senses.

Harry stepped forward and looked with wonder and admiration at the strange animal from which he had so narrowly escaped. Fully nine feet in length, lithe, black as night, and with the sheen of watered silk upon its inky fur, it was a beautiful creature, and different from anything the boy had ever seen.

"What is it?" he inquired of José, who had now calmed down and was preparing to skin the animal.

"*Tigre, señor,*" replied the Indian. "*Tigre negro—tigre mas grande y feroz. Que buen tiro!*" ("Tiger, sir. A black tiger—the biggest and fiercest of tigers. What a fine shot!") He drew a sharp, whistling breath of admiration.

Harry was puzzled. He remembered that Cap-

tain Perkins had told them that the natives called jaguars "tigers," but jaguars he had always thought were spotted, while this magnificent creature was black as coal. However, if José said 'twas a black tiger, that was sufficient, and now that the excitement was over he was so elated at his prowess and success that he gave thought to little else. José soon had the great cat skinned, and, rolling the hide into a bundle, he led the way back toward the boat.

Presently Harry heard the distant report of a gun, and wondered what success Paul was having. It seemed a long way to the creek, and Harry was quite hot and tired when at last they heard voices ahead and a moment later emerged from the jungle and reached the rest of the party beside the canoe.

"What luck, lad?" cried the captain. "Paul's not come in yet. Heard him shoot a little spell back."

"What did *you* shoot?" asked Mr. Rogers.

"Here's what I got," said Harry, pointing to the skin, which José now unrolled. "I don't know what 'tis, but José says it's a 'tigre negro.'"

The captain glanced at the great black skin, opened his mouth and blinked.

"Lor'!" he exclaimed. "Lor', Lor'! Why, lad, that's the all-firedest, whopping black tiger I ever saw. Lor' bless me! If I'd a thought there were any such critters about here I'd never have let ye go

off into the bush. Why, lad, ye might 'a' been killed by him."

"He came pretty near getting me," said Harry. He then related the story of the hunt, to which the captain and Mr. Rogers listened intently until interrupted by Paul's arrival.

"I shot a wild cat and a peccary," shouted Paul, as he came in sight of the others. "What did you get, Harry?"

"Come and see for yourself," replied his cousin. "Here 'tis."

"Whew!" cried Paul, when he saw the black skin. "Isn't that a beauty? What is it? A black jaguar, you say. My, what luck! How *did* you get him? Do tell us all about it."

Harry again told his story, while José stood nearby and related his version to his fellow Indians.

"What a bully adventure!" exclaimed Paul, when Harry had finished. "I'll bet you were scared when the tapir knocked you over."

"Not as scared as when I looked up and saw this beast and tried to shoot him on the wing," said Harry. "I've often heard of people's hair standing on end, but I never knew how it felt before."

"And that chap we bought the skins from said there weren't any jaguars near here," said Paul.

The captain called to José and asked him a few questions.

“José says that’s the first tiger that’s been killed hereabouts in years. Well, well! Ye’re a lucky chap, lad.”

Paul’s wildcat was a beautiful, spotted creature, nearly four feet long, and at any other time would have filled the youthful hunters with pride, but it paled into insignificance beside the big jaguar.

“I thought I was having fine luck,” remarked Paul, as the party reëntered the canoe for the return trip. “But you’ve beaten me completely. I’m glad that old tapir knocked you over,” he added with a laugh. “If you’d shot him too I’d feel like ‘thirty cents,’ as we used to say.”

“You’ve both done finely and have had exceptional luck,” said Mr. Rogers. “I’m glad I didn’t realize the danger you were in. I should have been worried every moment you were away.”

“Seems to me this treasure hunting’s turning into a big game hunt,” remarked the captain. “Plenty of old hunters would give their boots to get what you two boys have.”

Paddling back to the yacht with the manatee in tow was slow work, and it was nearly nightfall when at last they reached the village and boarded the “Cormorant.”

The boys’ adventures were retold to Tom and the sailor Henry, and Rami even forgot his pots and pans long enough to squat down and listen to the

tale of the day's hunt in the South American jungle.

"You'll certainly never forget Lake Maracaibo," remarked Mr. Rogers. "You've had a memorable day, but I'll never feel easy if you go hunting in the bush again. That was altogether too narrow an escape to suit me, Harry."

"Don't you fret, Rogers," cried the captain heartily. "The lads can take care o' themselves, all right—regular born adventurers. Lor', but wouldn't I 'a' liked to 'a' seen that danta a-bowling Harry over. Ha, ha, ha! Golly, Rogers, there's nothing like bein' a kid, after all."

CHAPTER XIII

IN THE LAND OF BOLIVAR

BIDDING good-bye to their lake-dweller friends the following morning, the yacht was headed for the open sea some three hundred miles distant. Late in the afternoon Maracaibo was passed, with Alta Gracia on the opposite side of the narrow entrance to the lake, and nightfall found the "Cormorant" upon the waters of the Gulf of Maracaibo.

The next morning Goajiro peninsula was within plain sight to the west, and all through the day the northernmost summits of the Andes were visible against the western sky.

By sundown the Punta Gallinas cape was abeam, the long swells of the Caribbean rolled beneath the yacht's keel and before a thrashing wind she tore onward through the blue water toward Santa Marta. Rio Hacha was passed at daybreak, but the captain told the boys there was nothing of particular interest in the town and that he hoped to make Santa Marta by nightfall.

The coast was monotonous and the boys soon

grew tired of watching it and devoted themselves to studying Spanish, playing with their newly-acquired pets, and writing letters, telling of their hunting experiences, to Mrs. Rogers and their boy friends at home.

Just as the sun sank behind the sparkling sea-rim the yacht rounded a tall, rocky point, covered



with giant cacti, and dropped anchor in the open roadstead before Santa Marta.

In the soft light of the sinking sun the city looked very pretty and unreal. The sandy beach with the gently breaking surf, the broad savannas, the red-roofed houses and the high twin towers of the cathedral gleamed rosy and golden; the azure sea took on a wonderful purple tint, and far in the background the snowcapped peaks of the Sierra Nevada mountains glittered like molten metal against the deep blue sky. Much to the boys' disappointment they were unable to go ashore that evening, for it was too late for the customs boat to come out to

the yacht and the evening was spent on board the "Cormorant."

The boys were awakened by the clatter of the cathedral bells, borne to them on the cool morning breeze from the mountains, and went on deck to find the revenue boat approaching.

"Why, I thought Santa Marta was in Colombia," exclaimed Paul; "that boat's flying the Venezuelan flag."

The captain laughed. "Look close, lad," he replied. "It's not the same, but I'm not surprised ye took one for t'other. They're pretty nigh the same thing."

"Well, *I* can't see any difference," declared Harry.

"This one has an oval design with a star in the center," said Paul. "I don't remember that the Venezuelan flag has that."

"Right ye are," cried the captain. "Venezuela shows a bunch o' stars and, besides, the three stripes on Venezuela's flag are all about equal size, while Colombia's has the red on the bottom narrowest and the yaller widest."

"Why do they have two flags so nearly alike?" asked Harry. "I should think it would be very confusing at a little distance."

"Venezuela and Colombia used to be one country," explained Mr. Rogers. "Venezuela has only

been a separate republic since 1830, and both nations have adopted flags as much like the original banner as possible."

The customs boat was now alongside, the formalities were soon over, and the boat left the "Cormorant" and headed for a fruit steamer which had just arrived in the harbor.

As soon as breakfast was over the boys boarded the launch and the party were soon treading the soil of the United States of Colombia.



"It looks like an awfully parched and barren country," remarked Harry, as a sudden gust of wind whirled a cloud of dust from the glaring roadway.

"I don't see much except century plants and cactus," added Paul. "Do the Colombians raise anything?"

"Heaps," replied the captain. "This particular spot's a bit dry and poor, but of late years they've been raising a sight of bananas here. United Fruit boats come here regular. Back in the interior they raise pretty nigh everything—coffee's the biggest crop, bananas come next, and then rubber, cocoa, tobacco, woods, and a heap of other things. Panama hats make a big item and cattle and hides mount up to the millions. Then there's the mines—gold, platinum, silver, and emeralds

come from the mountains. Colombia's a rich country, lads."

"Do you suppose we could find emeralds if we went into the mountains?" asked Paul.

The captain laughed. "Lor', no!" he exclaimed. "Emeralds ain't lying around ready to be picked up. Even if ye found a mine 'twouldn't do ye any good. All the emeralds belong to the government."

"Santa Marta appears to be very old," remarked Mr. Rogers, as they approached the outlying buildings. "It reminds me of the cities in southern Europe or northern Africa."

"Dunno just how old 'tis," replied the captain; "but 'tain't been changed much in four hundred years, I'll bet ye."

As the boys strolled through the old streets, saw the heavy iron gratings on the windows, the massive walls of the buildings and the carved and emblazoned doorways, they could almost imagine they were back in the days of Cortez and Pizarro. Here and there were more modern buildings, telephone and telegraph wires were numerous, electric lights were everywhere and when the boys caught sight of a motor truck and several "Fords" they decided that Santa Marta wasn't so far behind the times after all.

A visit to Bolivar's birthplace and the old cathedral completed the sight-seeing and the boys were

glad to board the yacht, as the air on shore was insufferably hot.

“Reckon we might as well make Barranquilla this evening,” remarked the captain. “That’ll save sailing to-night, and we can anchor in the Magdalena.



Then the next day we can cruise about among the reefs and keys a-looking for that wreck that’s set down on the map.”

By mid afternoon the boys noticed that the blue water of the sea had turned to a dull and muddy brown.

“I suppose that’s due to the Magdalena River,” said Paul. “I remember ’twas the same way at Tobago, and father said it was the mud from the Orinoco.”

“Right ye be,” said the captain. “Sometimes we can see the color of the river a hundred miles or more out to sea.”

Two hours later they entered the molasses-colored Magdalena, passed the long pier at Savanilla, and, under power, headed up the great river toward Barranquilla.

“What’s the big building up on the bluff?” asked Harry as the boys looked shoreward at the little town they were passing.

“That’s the old customs house,” replied the captain, with a laugh. “Lor’ knows how they built it



The massive walls and emblazoned doorways of the buildings.

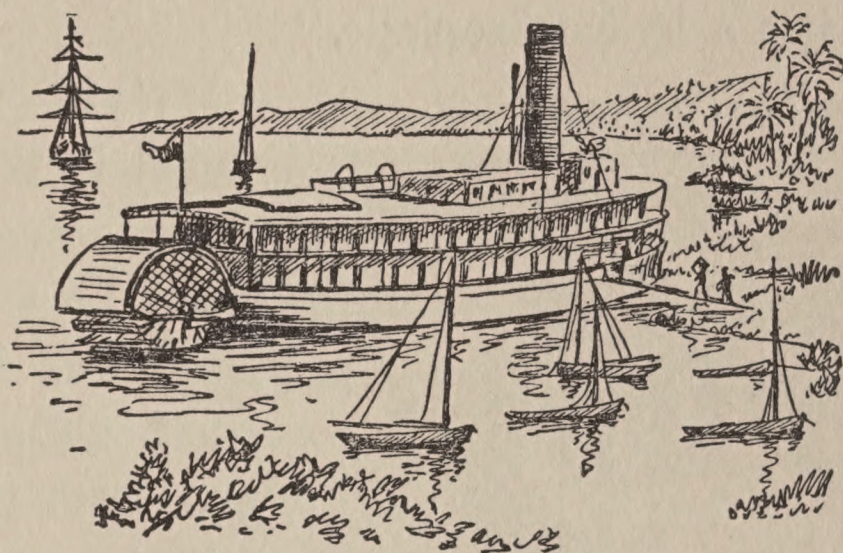


Negresses squatted beside piles of vegetables.

up there. Reckon it's handier to the railway than the shipping."

"Is there a railway here?" asked Paul.

"Yes, runs to Barranquilla, about twenty miles up the river. This place is just its seaport. Savanilla it used to be, but nowadays they call it



Puerto Colombia. A heap of stuff comes down the river and goes through this port."

"That's a pretty good sized place," said Harry, as the yacht reached Barranquilla and anchored near the dock.

Rowboats, sailing craft, lighters, tugs and steamers crowded the river and the boys amused themselves watching the various craft while waiting for the customs boat. The shallow-draft, stern-wheel steamers interested them greatly, and the captain pointed out a vessel which he told them was the "Antonio Nariño" and which he said was con-

structed entirely of native material in the local shipyards.

"She's used in dredging and canalization work in the rivers," he explained.

"Oh, look there!" Harry exclaimed. "Here comes an aëroplane."

"Well, these people *are* up to date," cried Paul. "Why, it's a hydroaëroplane."



"What in the world is that machine doing down here?" asked Harry, as the aircraft swept past and settled gracefully in a little slip near the town.

"Just down from Giradot, I reckon," said the captain. "There's where the Colombian chaps beat the folks back in the States. Got a regular line of those flying machines here a-running 'twixt Barranquilla and Giradot, up the river."

"Do you mean they actually use the machines for transportation?" asked Mr. Rogers in a surprised tone.

"Dunno as they're actually a-carrying passengers and cargo," replied the captain, "but that's the

idea. Government's given a contract to a company to run a line of the craft over the course. Trip takes four days and costs sixty dollars a passenger. The government agrees to pay the company eighty dollars subsidy for every trip for not more'n ten trips a month. I expect that's about all they're a-getting out of it at present."

"That's great," declared Harry. "Imagine a regular line of aëroplanes clear down here when there isn't anything of the sort at home. The boys will never believe that."

"This river must form the outlet for an immense area of country, judging by the shipping," remarked Mr. Rogers. "I believe Bogota's reached through this port."

"Yes, sir," answered the captain. "The Magdalena valley's a rich place and the Cauca valley's just as rich, if not richer. There's a lot of country reached by this river. It's navigable for six hundred miles. Still, mighty little of Colombia's cultivated or settled. It's a whooping big place—size of Germany, France, Holland, and Belgium all rolled into one. Most folks don't have any idea of the size o' the countries down here."

"Goodness, I never realized it was so big," exclaimed Paul. "Colombia and Venezuela don't look big on the maps."

"Venezuela's pretty nigh as big," replied the

captain. "But they don't look big on the maps for two reasons. One is that the maps are spread out flat. Look at 'em on a globe and they'll look bigger—but the main reason is that South America's so tremendous big these countries don't make much show on it. Most folks seem to think the United



States occupies pretty nigh the whole of the western hemisphere, but, Lor', the whole of the States could be dropped into Brazil and leave plenty of room for New England, New York and a few other states 'round the edges. Why, lads, three-fourths of the whole New World belongs to these 'ere Latin-American chaps and more'n half the inhabitants of the western hemisphere speak Spanish or Portugee."

"Gracious, I never knew that before," declared Harry. "A fellow learns a lot more by visiting these places than by going to school."

"Right ye are, lad," cried the captain. "If I was a-running a school I'd just pile all the kids aboard a ship and take 'em for a cruise 'round the world. Bet ye I would."

The customs boat had now reached the yacht and, as several hours of daylight remained, the party went ashore to see the town, for the captain wished to leave early the following morning.

The boys found a great deal to interest them and, although much of the city was modern, yet many portions were old and the streets were thronged with people of innumerable races. The stolid-faced Indians and the mestizos mingled with blacks from the West Indian islands, colored people from everywhere and whites from nearly every country of Europe. Fashionably dressed merchants, daintily gowned ladies, and half naked native laborers passed and repassed. Negresses in bright gowns and flaming turbans squatted at corners beside little piles of odd vegetables and fruits; barefooted Indians walked silently along carrying poles covered with Panama hats for sale; and brigandish looking drivers of pack trains from the interior stopped to chat with friends, while their tired animals rested by the roadside.



“Ye’d get a pretty good idea of the folks of the whole republic if ye hung about here a spell,” remarked the captain, as they sat down to rest in a little plaza. “And I reckon ye could buy pretty nigh anything what’s raised, grown, dug or made right here in Savanilla. If you boys want some Panama hats ye might as well get ’em here. They’re dirt cheap and genuine. I always used to lay in a stock when over this way.”

The boys thought it would be fine to secure some real Panamas right in the country where they were made and, with the captain's help, they were soon bargaining with a hat-seller. The man explained how the hats were woven and in this the boys became greatly interested. When they again boarded the yacht they had hats for themselves and all their friends and in addition had obtained a collection of hats in all stages of manufacture, from the raw straw, which the captain told them wasn't straw at all, but the leaves of a palmetto, to the finished hats.

"I thought Panama hats came from Panama," said Harry, as they walked toward the landing place.

"A lot of 'em do nowadays," replied the captain, "but that isn't why they're called Panama. All the best of 'em used to come from Ecuador and Colombia, but they were shipped out through Panama and the Isthmus and got their name that way. Late years they've been growing the 'toquilla' palm in Panama and making some fine hats there, but, Lor', the best of 'em never comes north. Why, lads, I've seen hats down in Ecuador that sold for a hundred dollars each and that soft ye could roll 'em up and put 'em in your vest-pocket."

"Reckon we'll be a-hunting about for that wreck afore sundown," remarked the captain as the "Cor-



Indians with poles covered with Panama hats.



Drivers of pack trains stopped to chat.

morant" dropped down the river the next morning.

"I hope we have better luck than with the last two," said Paul.

"We're almost at the end of the cruise and we haven't found anything," Harry added in a disappointed tone.

The captain's eyes twinkled merrily as he answered: "Ye got a pretty good jaunt ahead of ye yet, lads. Can't ever tell what *may* turn up, ye know. We've got two wrecks that are on the map and we may run across some others for all we can tell. Hullo! what's the matter with old Rami?"

As the captain had been speaking the yacht had been approaching a large steamer inward bound and as the ship drew close Rami, who stood watching it from the galley door, suddenly sprang to the rail, brandishing a shining carving knife in his hand and commenced shouting wildly at the passing steamer.

"What on earth's the matter?" cried Paul, as the captain and the boys ran forward.

"Are you going crazy, Rami?" exclaimed Mr. Rogers.

"Looke, sahib, looke!" cried the Hindu excitedly and pointing to the other ship. "Me see tha mon, sar. Looke, he thar, sahib. Joe on tha sheep."

Everyone turned instantly to look at the steamer. "Joe?" exclaimed Harry. "You don't mean Portuguese Joe who knocked you down last year?"

"Yes, sar," declared Rami. "Me see he on tha sheep. Me no mistake, sahib."

"Well, I can't see him," said Mr. Rogers.

"Nor can I," agreed Harry.

"Reckon the old chap mistook someone else," remarked the captain.

The boat was now some distance astern, but the officers and passengers who had crowded to the rail to watch Rami's strange and threatening antics were still looking back curiously at the yacht.

Rami persisted in his statement that Joe was aboard the steamer and declared he had seen him staring down over the ship's forecastle rail at the yacht.

"Some time, bimeby, me cartch tha mon, mebbe," said the Hindu.

"What will you do then?" Harry asked, half jokingly.

For answer Rami picked up the big carving knife and drew it suggestively across his throat.

"Whew! you are a revengeful old chap," exclaimed Paul. "Better not do that, Rami. Just get those sinewy arms of yours around him and holler for help. Then we'll get him locked up where he belongs."

“Yes, sahib Paul. Me do like you tell mos’ surely, sar,” replied Rami obediently as he resumed his duties in the galley.

“I reckon old Rami may be right after all,” remarked the captain thoughtfully. “Been having a sort of feeling that Portugee scalawag was a-going to cross our hawse some time. Well, I’m not going back to find out. Good riddance to him, I say.”

“It’s lucky for him that Rami didn’t get hold of him,” said Paul. “The old fellow hasn’t forgotten or forgiven Joe for knocking him in the head down at Grenada.”

Tom at the wheel had remained silent, but now, touching his cap, he spoke:

“Beggin’ your pardon, sir,” he said, “the bloom-in’ Hindu’s a-tellin’ of the Gospel truth. I ’appened to cast me weather eye on the bally ship an’, blow me, if I didn’t see the Dago a monkey-facin’ over the bul’arks meself. I ain’t like to be mistook, sir; ’twas me fetched him out o’ the bloomin’ whale boat, if ye mind.”

“We’ll have to admit Rami was right then,” said Mr. Rogers. “I suppose it’s not so remarkable a coincidence after all.”

Just before noon some small islands were sighted and the captain, after referring to his charts, announced that it was among these that the wreck of the treasure ship was supposed to be.

The spot was full of rocks, submerged reefs and islets and the "Cormorant" was stripped of canvas and run slowly ahead under her motor. At last a sheltered deep anchorage was found behind a cay, the launch was lowered and, filled with suppressed excitement, the boys, with Mr. Rogers and the captain, started forth to search for the ancient wreck.

CHAPTER XIV

A REMARKABLE COMBAT

IN many places the water was clear and the bottom could be seen plainly, but in other spots masses of dark waving weeds and swift-flowing currents made it difficult to distinguish objects a few feet beneath the surface.

Back and forth among the islets and reefs circled the launch, the boys, Mr. Rogers and the captain peering intently over the sides of the boat.

“Whew! what was that?” exclaimed Paul as a great, dark shadow glided out of sight behind a submerged reef.

“Shark, I reckon,” answered the captain. “Yes,” he added a moment later, “yonder’s another of the critters.”

“Are they man-eaters?” asked Harry.

“Dunno,” replied the captain. “Like as not they be. There’s plenty of ’em and to spare ’round these parts.”

“No diving after wrecks for me,” announced Paul. “I don’t want treasure badly enough to go down among sharks.”

Captain Perkins laughed gaily. "Lor' bless your soul," he cried, "the fish won't hurt ye—leastways when ye're a wearing of a diving suit. They're a heap more scared of a diver than a diver'd be of them."

Several more sharks were seen, but they appeared very timid and swam out of sight at the approach of the boat.

"I always thought sharks followed a boat about, ready to snatch anyone that tumbled overboard," said Harry.

"That's just yarns," declared the captain. "Sometimes they'll follow after a ship or a boat, but it's just for the sake of picking up bits of garbage and stuff that's tossed overboard. Why, I've been living down the islands for years and I've never known of a *genuine* case of a man being touched by the critters. Of course, folks *have* been eat; but if a chap keeps a moving in the water the fish'll most generally leave him alone. They're cowardly critters and pretty slow when they try to turn over to bite. I've seen the natives dive right down among 'em and shove 'em right and left with their hands and feet."

"Well, they give me the shivers. I hate the beasts," declared Paul.

The launch was now approaching a small, sandy island and everyone was looking carefully at the

smooth, white bottom far below. They were so intent upon their search that they failed to notice a small sailboat anchored in a tiny cove with a colored man fishing from the side until they were startled at the sound of his voice.

“Arfternoon, sahs,” he called. “S’archin’ fo’ somethin’, sahs?”

“Why, he’s speaking English,” exclaimed Paul in surprise, as they caught sight of the negro.

The darky grinned. “Ah surely is, sah,” he chuckled. “Yo’ didn’t think Ah was a Spaghetti, sah, did yo’? No, sah, Ah’m from Turk’s Islan’, sah. Yo’ a-huntin’ fo’ brain-stone (coral), sahs?”

“No, we’re looking for a wreck,” said the captain. “Ever seen one hereabouts a-lying on the bottom?”

“S’archin’ fo’ a wrack,” repeated the negro. “No, sah,” he continued, “Ah cawn’t say Ah knows o’ one ’sactly here’bout, bass. Larng o’ Perro Key Ah’s cotched sight o’ one, sah.”

“Where’s Perro Key?” inquired Captain Perkins.

“Just there, sah,” replied the darky. He pointed to the west.

“How far away—how long a row? Can you show us where ’tis?” asked the captain.

“Ah ’spect it’s ’bout two hours’ row, sah,” replied the fisherman. “Lak as not yo’ll mak’ it in a

hour o' less with da big boat, sah. Ah surely can guide yo' there, bass."

"You're sure there's a wreck there?" demanded the captain. "Never seen one around these 'ere reefs?"

"Ah been a-fishin' here'bout for mos' two years, sah," replied the negro, "an' Ah never cotched sight o' a wrack in arl that time, 'ceptin' over larng-side Perro Key, bass."

"All right, boy," said the captain, "hitch your boat to the launch and come aboard the yacht and we'll run over to Perro Key. Reckon that's the wreck we're a-looking for."

They were soon aboard the yacht, the anchor was raised and with the black man at the wheel the "Cormorant" was headed among the reefs.

"Sure ye know how to handle the yacht without a-running her aground?" queried the captain.

The colored man grinned. "Ah'm a Turk's Islan' boy," he replied proudly, as if that set at rest all doubts of his skill as a pilot. Then after a moment he added, "Ah 'spect yo're jus' a tryin' to humbug me, Cap'n Frank."

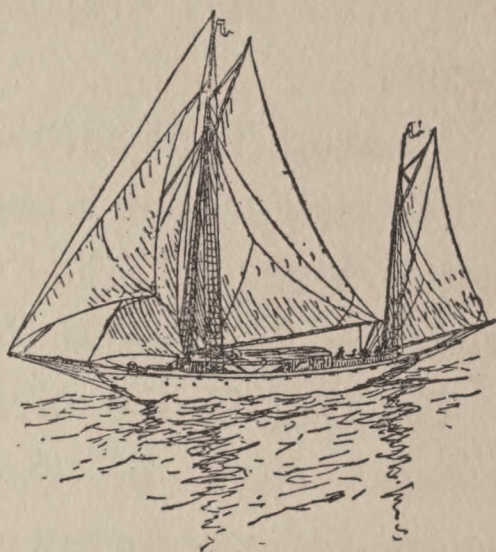
The captain gave a start of surprise and stared at the strange darky.

"Who are you callin' Cap'n Frank?" he demanded. "How do you know my name, you scala-wag?"

The negro grinned. "Ah been thinkin' Ah knowed who yo' was," he replied. "Ah jus' mak' sure now, bass. Yo' surely are growed corp'lent, Cap'n, sence Ah was yo' boy on tha ol' 'Orima.' "

"Lor'!" exclaimed the captain. "You don't mean to tell me you're Sam Frith? Well, well, well! I'd never 'a' known ye. Why, Sam, last time I saw you, ye was just a little lad."

Turning to the boys, who had been interested spectators of the strange meeting, he cried: "Lads, this chap's Sam Frith, used to be my cabin boy on the 'Orima.' Smart boy he was, too."



"What ye been doing all these years, Sam?" he asked, again addressing the negro.

As Sam cleverly piloted the "Cormorant" among the keys and reefs he told the captain of his wanderings. Tiring of a sailor's life, he had worked at various jobs among the islands, had finally secured employment on the Panama Canal, and from there had come to Cartagena to work on a dredge. Then, having saved a little money, he had purchased a boat, built a shack at a little village near by and had since been leading a happy-go-lucky life raising garden truck and fishing.

"Thar's Perro Key," he announced at last. "Jes' drop yo' anchor, Cap'n, an' Ah'll lead yo' to tha wrack O.K., sah."

Directed by Sam the launch threaded its way between the reefs to a deep, quiet bay, protected on one side by a coral bank and on the other by the little islet with its waving palms and tropical brush.

"Larng 'bout here's tha spot, Cap'n," said Sam. "Jes look yonder larngside tha big sea-fan an' yo'll cotch sight o' tha wrack." He pointed down through the crystal-clear water.

Looking in the direction he indicated, the boys caught sight of the wreck—a mass of coral-encrusted, weed-grown timbers which seemed almost a part of the ocean's bed.

"Hurrah," shouted Harry. "Now we can really go down and look for treasure."

"Reckon we'd better be a-getting the diving outfit over here," said the captain, "no use wasting time."

Then turning to Sam he said: "Plenty o' water for the yacht here, Sam? Can't we work her in close to the wreck? We can't run the air pump on the launch."

"Ah 'spect we can, Cap'n," replied Sam. "What yo' want to humbug with a divin' suit fo', sah? Ah'll be pleased to do tha divin' if you wish, Cap'n."

“Hadn’t thought of that,” laughed the captain. “Reckon ’twould be a big saving of time and trouble. Any rate, you can find out if there’s any stuff in the old hulk worth saving. If ye run across anything too hefty to get up we’ll use the suit.”

Sam commenced peeling off his clothes. “Yo’ ’spect tha’s treasure down in tha wrack?” he asked with a grin.

“Dunno,” replied the captain. “The lads here are on a treasure hunt and we’re searching for old wrecks. Ever hear of any treasure hereabouts, Sam? Ever been down to this wreck afore?”

“No, sah,” replied Sam, as he balanced himself on the gunwale of the boat. The next second he had slipped into the water with scarce a splash and the boys watched him as, with long strokes, he swam downward to the wreck.

Presently he reached it, swam slowly about close to it, and then his head dipped down and his legs turned up and the boys could see nothing but the pink soles of his feet kicking at the water while a cloud of mud and silt appeared about him.

“He’s clawing after something,” declared the captain. “Here he comes,” he added. As the captain spoke the diver turned over and with a frog-like kick shot to the surface alongside the launch.

Shaking the water from his woolly head, he reached over the gunwale and dropped some heavy object into the boat.

"What is it?" cried Harry, as he and Paul examined the thing Sam had brought up.

"Dunno," replied the captain. Drawing his knife he commenced knocking bits of coral and shells from the strange object.

Presently a dull green metallic surface was exposed.

"'Taint treasure, anyhow," announced Captain Perkins. "Copper or bronze, whatever 'tis." With a few more blows of the heavy knife-blade the remaining encrustations were removed.

"Oh, it's a bell!" exclaimed Paul.

"Right ye be," said the captain. "Old ship's bell. Look here, lads, there's writing on it."

The captain carefully scraped away the verdigris, while the boys gathered close, and soon a number of letters and figures were revealed.

"What does it say?" cried Harry.

"H. M. S. Terrier, A. D. 1809," read the captain slowly. "Shucks!" he exclaimed, "'Tain't a treasure ship at all. British sloop-o'-war. Joke's on us, lads." He roared with laughter.

"Well, it's a mighty interesting relic," declared Harry. "Don't you suppose there may be some money or treasure down there?"

“Dunno, but I reckon not,” said the captain. “Sam can slip down again and have another look about.”

Again the negro swam rapidly down; once more the soles of his feet were upturned and again he bobbed to the surface.

“Ah found somethin’,” he exclaimed as he reached the boat. “Ah can’ lif’ it, Cap’n. Jes’ parse me a line an’ Ah’ll go down an’ mek it fas’ an’ yo’ll hist it up O. K.”

With the coil of light rope he again descended and worked steadily over the wreck for some time before he again bobbed up.

“Arl ready, bass,” he announced as he climbed into the launch.

Everyone tailed onto the line and pulled. Slowly the line gave and the boys watched curiously to see what the object was which they were lifting from the wreck of the old British war ship. Presently it was alongside and with the boys’ help the captain and Mr. Rogers lifted it into the launch.

“Hurrah, it’s a cannon,” cried Paul, as the long, coral-covered object was rolled into the bottom of the boat.

“Well, well! So ’tis!” exclaimed the captain. “Any more down there?” he inquired of Sam.

“Ah’ll have another s’arch,” replied the darky, and for the third time slipped into the water.

So much coral, mud and sand had now been disturbed by the diver's operations that he was scarcely visible and the boys had difficulty in distinguishing the outlines of the wreck.



Suddenly a dark moving shadow crossed a patch of white sandy bottom.

"Oh! There's a shark!" cried Paul.

"Look out!" yelled Harry, not stopping to realize the diver could not hear him.

"I do hope he sees it!" exclaimed Mr. Rogers.

"Lor'! he's making straight for him," declared the captain. "Must a-been attracted by all that coral muck."

"Oh, dear, it will be terrible if he's killed!" cried Harry.

"He sees him," announced the captain.

All were watching eagerly and they now saw the form of the negro shoot to one side as the great shadowy fish dashed toward him, and as the shark's belly shone white and the great jaws snapped together the diver passed behind the creature and bobbed to the surface in safety.

"Kinder close shave, Sam," cried the captain as the darky clambered into the boat. "Reckon I'll have to take back what I said 'bout the critters."

"You speak true, Cap'n," said Sam with a grin.

“Ah didn’t ’spect a shark-fish a humbuggin’ ’roun’.”

As Sam spoke he reached to his bundle of clothing, drew a long sheath-knife from his belt, and stepped to the edge of the launch.

“What *are* you going to do?” asked Paul.

The negro grinned: “Ah’m jes’ a-goin’ fo’ a bit o’ argumentin’ with tha shark,” he replied.

“You don’t mean you’re really going down to fight with him?” cried Harry incredulously.

“Ah surely am, bass,” replied the negro, and without further ado dropped into the sea.

“Now you’ll see some fun,” declared the captain as Mr. Rogers and the boys peered over the rail into the depths.

“Does that fellow really expect to keep the shark off with his knife?” asked Mr. Rogers.

“No,” replied the captain with a chuckle. “He’s a-going to kill him. Those Bahama chaps swim a heap better than a shark and shark-fighting’s a fav’rite sport with ’em. There comes the critter. Look sharp, lads.”

The boys could see Sam swimming slowly along with head and chest well up and the knife gleaming in his right hand. A short distance away the great shark hung, almost motionless in the shadow of a growth of coral. Suddenly, with a sweep of his tail, he darted forward, rolled gracefully on his side and

opened his enormous jaws to seize his expected prey. Quick as he was the man was quicker yet and with a stroke of his feet he shot beneath the fish, wheeled about, grasped one of the shark's fins with his left hand and drove the knife to its hilt into the creature's throat.

The next instant the crystalline water was reddened with blood, Sam bobbed up to the surface and, as he clambered into the boat, the great fish gave a few convulsive struggles and slowly floated belly upward, stone dead.

The boys drew long breaths. "Whew!" exclaimed Harry. "That *was* fine."

"The most marvelous feat I've ever witnessed," declared Mr. Rogers.

"Pretty neat trick, Sam!" cried the captain.

The Bahaman grinned and commenced pulling on his clothes. "Ah 'spect tha's no use a goin' down mo', Cap'n," he remarked. "Tha blood o' tha shark'll bring a plenty mo' 'bout. Ah don' min' a set-to 'larng one o' two; but Ah carn't rightly s'arch tha wrack when they's a humbuggin' 'bout, sah."

"No need, Sam," cried the captain. "Reckon there's no more stuff worth getting anyhow, and it's coming time for us to be leaving."

"I'd rather have seen that shark fight than to have found treasure," declared Paul, as the launch



Grasped one of the shark's fins and drove the knife into its throat.
Courtesy The Williamson Brothers Submarine Expedition, Universal Motion Pictures

was turned around and headed toward the "Cormorant."

"Well, we're not empty-handed. We've actually got some things from the wreck," said Harry. "Besides," he added, "we may find treasure in the next wreck and we'll never have another chance to see a man kill a shark under water."

"That's the right spirit, Harry," said Mr. Rogers. "All the treasure in the Spanish Main isn't to be compared with what you can see and learn on such a trip as this."

They had now reached the "Cormorant" and Sam began to unfasten his boat preparatory to leaving.

"Hold on there, you rascal," cried the captain. "Take a turn o' your painter 'round the after-rail and come aboard. We'll take ye along and drop ye right afore your own home."

"Thank you kindly, Cap'n," said Sam with a broad grin. "Ah'll p'int out tha cove as yo' parse 'larng by."

A mile or two farther on Sam showed the captain the little sheltered cove, with the neat thatched huts and green banana trees where he lived and the yacht was brought into the wind close to the shore.

The boys loaded Sam with presents, the captain gave him canned goods and other provisions, Mr. Rogers presented him with a number of fish hooks

and other tackle, and Tom, not to be outdone, handed him several plugs of tobacco. At last, with everything safely stowed in his boat, and with a handful of Spanish silver jingling in his pockets, he bade his former employer and his friends good-bye and started toward the beach, while the "Cormorant" heeled to the breeze and sailed onwards toward Cartagena.

CHAPTER XV

THE TREASURE HOUSE OF SPAIN

Two hours after leaving Sam the yacht rounded a point and the boys saw the towers, walls and buildings of ancient Cartagena rising above the low-lying coast ahead.

"It looks like a picture of some Oriental city," declared Paul.

"How de we get to it? I don't see any harbor," asked Harry.

"Ye'll have to wait a bit afore ye see the entrance," replied Captain Perkins. "It's beyond those sandy dunes yonder."



For half an hour the yacht sailed steadily on—the city within plain view, but with no sign of any passage through the land which separated it from the sea. Then, heading straight toward the shore, the "Cormorant" ran between two capes and into a narrow, tortuous passage. Presently the last turn was passed and the yacht entered the most perfect harbor imaginable.

On the left a low ridge hid the sea beyond, to the right the green hills and savannas stretched away toward the distant mountains, while in the center was the old Moorish-looking town with its great wall rising from the water's edge, its domes, towers and roofs of red Spanish tiles, its softly tinted buildings and picturesque battlements.

Bright-hued fishing boats, dug-out canoes, sailing craft of every description and several large steam-



ers swung to their moorings and lined the waterfront and beyond all rose verdured hills with age-gray forts frowning upon the peaceful scene below.

Hardly had the yacht dropped anchor before the town when she was surrounded by crowds of canoes loaded with oranges, pineapples, mangoes, and countless other fruits, while upon the gunwales perched squawking parrots, screaming macaws and toucans and chattering monkeys. In each craft squatted a brown, yellow or black native armed with a queer spoon-shaped paddle and each and every one jabbered, yelled and importuned the visitors to buy his goods until the din was almost deafening.

As soon as they found there was no market for



The cove where Sam lived.



Creaking ox carts passed along the streets.

their wares aboard the yacht the bumboats departed and gave their attention to another vessel, while the boys—the customs officers having left—embarked in the launch and were soon at the landing place before the city gate.

Cartagena was by far the most ancient looking city the party had visited, and, although the ruins at San Domingo were older, yet there was a heavy, substantial and enduring appearance about Cartagena which made it look as if it had been in existence for all time.

Unlike the other Venezuelan and Colombian cities they had seen, Cartagena swarmed with blacks, and the boys felt as if they were once more back in the small islands.



Many of the streets were narrow, paved with rough and uneven cobbles and apparently unaltered since the days of the first settlement; but many others were smooth, wide, and well kept. Creaking ox carts, mule trains with jingling bells, gaily caparisoned equestrians, victorias and carriages, motor trucks and automobiles passed and repassed on the busier thoroughfares, while electric lights, telephones and similar modern improvements

seemed incongruous and out of place in this ancient stronghold of the Spanish Main.

"Did the pirates ever attack Cartagena?" asked Harry as the visitors came to the big central plaza.

"Plenty of 'em did," replied the captain. "Morgan had a shy at it and Drake took it and held it for ransom in 1586. Old Cartagena's seen more hard fighting than most any spot along the Spanish Main."

"Well, just look there!" exclaimed Paul. He pointed to a small restaurant on a nearby corner.

Everyone laughed as they saw the sign which bore a gaudy picture of a florid cavalier on a prancing horse with the legend, "Café Jorge Washington," beneath.

"Reckon we'll have to patronize that café," laughed the captain. "I told ye these folks thought a heap of the Father o' our country."

"Did you know that Washington's brother had a hand in taking Cartagena at one time?" asked Mr. Rogers, as they crossed the street.

"No indeed!" replied Harry. "When did that happen?"

"Back in 1741," replied his uncle. "He led a landing force when the British under Admiral Vernon attacked the place. Mount Vernon was named after the old admiral."

From the restaurant the captain led the party to

the old Inquisition building, where the ancient rack did duty as a window-grating, and where the boys saw the cells, instruments of torture and other relics of olden times and Spanish rule.

The catacombs were also visited and the captain told the boys that it was rumored that hidden subterranean passages connected with the various forts, convents and Inquisition buildings.

"Wouldn't it be fun to hunt them up and explore them," said Harry.

"Like as not," replied the captain. "When the old pirates and buccaneers took the town the folks hid a heap of their riches and maybe some of 'em were killed or

carried off and never dug up their wealth. Used to be a mighty rich place—'Treasure House o' Spain' 'twas called in those days."

"I don't see how Drake or anyone else ever took this town," remarked Mr. Rogers. "Its harbor is so well protected and the city is so thoroughly fortified that it must have been well nigh impregnable in ancient times."

"They had a hard job," said the captain. "More'n sixty million dollars was spent fortifying



it—but loss of life didn't count in those days and they'd attempt anything if there was a chance of loot. At one time the Spaniards stretched a chain across t'other entrance to the harbor to keep the pirates out, but the rascals came in the other way and the chain just bottled up the Spaniards' own ships and made 'em easy prey. The old entrance wasn't ever opened again and last time I was here they was talkin' of dredging it out. I reckon they've been doing a heap o' cleaning up and dredging since I was here, by the looks o' things."

"I hope they never modernize the town," remarked Mr. Rogers. "It's bad enough to have motor cars, trolleys and electric lights in these hoary old places. I can forgive these for their utility, but skyscrapers, plate glass windows and department stores would rob the place of all its attractions."

"Reckon you're right, Rogers," agreed the captain. "But 'tain't likely they'll be spoiled during your time. I can't see as they've changed much in fifty years."

"I think these places are mighty interesting," declared Paul. "The only trouble is," he added, "that they're all too much alike. Every one looks different from the sea, but after you're inside the walls the streets, buildings, and people all seem the same."

"I presume that's because they were built about the same time and by the same people," remarked

his father. "I noticed the same thing in the West Indian towns when I first visited them."

"Just the same, I'd hate to miss one of the places," said Harry.

"Ye've seen all o' any account along this coast," declared the captain.

"Where do we stop next?" asked Paul.

"Down in the Gulf o' Darien," replied the captain. "We'll try to locate that wreck down Uraba way. Then we'll run along the Isthmus to Porto Bello and Colon."

"Then our trip's nearly over," lamented Paul.

"What put that idea in your head?" asked the captain with a chuckle.

"Why, we're going to leave the 'Cormorant' at Colon, you know," said Paul.

"Umm," muttered the captain. "Reckon ye've forgotten this 'ere's a treasure-hunting cruise and we're not running on schedule. Never *can* tell what may happen on a trip o' this sort."

"I believe you've some surprise for us, Captain



Frank!" cried Harry. "I saw you wink at Uncle Charles."

"You *are* an observing lad," laughed the captain, and despite the teasing of the boys he refused to say more.

The boys went ashore for a few hours the next morning and then having seen all the places of interest and after a drive into the outlying country and to the forts and convents, they returned to the yacht.

Soon Cartagena was far astern and southward along the Colombian coast the "Cormorant" sailed onward into the Gulf of Darien. Harry and Paul busied themselves with maps and charts, tracing their course and talking over the many places they had seen.

"The Gulf of Uraba seems to be a sort of out-of-the-way spot," remarked Mr. Rogers, who was also studying the map.

"Have you ever been there, captain?" asked Paul.

"Never have," replied the captain. "No ports worth speaking of down there, but I reckon I won't get lost." He laughed gaily.

"Oh, I didn't mean that," said Paul. "I thought perhaps you could tell us something about it—stories of the pirates or something of that sort."

"Dunno much about it, aside from that old wreck being marked on the chart; but I've heard it used

to be a great spot for pirates to hang out in. Mighty handy to both Cartagena and Porto Bello. Those were the great shipping ports for treasure in those days."

"Was Porto Bello attacked by pirates?" asked Harry.

"Lor' bless your heart, yes," cried the captain.

"Do tell us all about it," begged Paul.

"All right, lad," said the captain. "There's nothing particular to do just now and I'll tell ye all I know about the place."



"Ye see," he commenced, "all the gold and treasure o' the west coast was packed across the Isthmus to be shipped off to Spain. Panama was the Pacific port and Porto Bello the shipping place on the Atlantic side. From one of the towns to the other was just a rough trail, but such a heap o' treasure was brought over that road that folks called it the 'Gold Road.' Lor' knows how much wealth was carted over the old trail on muleback, but I've heard that the ransom o' the Incas over in Peru was toted over the trail and was worth over ten million dollars and that was just a mite of all that was carried across. Sometimes as many as forty galleons were lying in Porto Bello harbor at one time, and the commerce

of the Isthmus amounted to two or three hundred million o' dollars a year. After a spell the pirates, who had been a-seizing the treasure ships on their way to Spain, got tired o' such pickings and decided to go straight to headquarters and grab the gold afore 'twas shipped. That's the way they did with La Guaira, Cartagena and other spots, and finally they made up their minds to tackle Porto Bello and Panama. Old Morgan was the chap who did it and he had a pretty tough job at that. Think of a crew o' sailormen a-landing in the enemy's country, hiking over the trail across the mountains and through swamps and jungles and attacking a fortified city on t'other coast. He did it, though, and sacked and burnt Panama and got safe back to his ships with the treasure. That was along back in 1671, and old Panama's never been built up since. Ye can see the ruins of the old buildings there still. Nowadays Porto Bello don't amount to much, 'cepting for the ruins; the old Gold Road's grown over with bush and Colon's the port. Folks that travel across to the Pacific and Panama by the railroad or Canal don't think o' what used to be a-going on in the old days. Reckon old Morgan'd be a bit surprised to take a trip over yonder to-day. Bet ye he would."

"I'd love to go across the Isthmus," declared Paul.



Many of the streets were wide and well kept.



Automobiles seemed incongruous and out of place.

"I'd rather go by the old Gold Road than by the Canal," said Harry.

"Ye'd find it pretty tough going," laughed the captain. "I reckon the Canal's better worth seeing and a sight more wonderful than the old road. I was down to Colon just after the French chaps gave up the job and again after the Yankees took hold. I tell ye there's been some changes made!"

"Will we have a chance to see the Canal?" asked Harry. "It would be a shame to miss it when right at its eastern end," he added.

"Its western end, you should say," said his uncle. "Colon is further west than Panama."

"That's so," said Paul, glancing at the map. "Isn't that funny?"

"I can tell you something funnier than that," declared the captain. "Ye'll hardly believe it," he continued, "but up at Colon the sun rises in the Pacific and sets in the Atlantic. Reckon it's the only place in the world where that happens."

"I think 'twould be fine to really sail through the Canal to Panama and see the Pacific," said Paul. "Morgan went across," he continued, "and if we're following in his wake we ought to go as far as he did."

"We won't plan ahead," replied his father. "We still have a wreck to hunt for, you know. You can't

tell what may happen, eh, captain?" He smiled and winked at Captain Perkins.

"I *would* like to know what you two have up your sleeves," exclaimed Harry, "but I suppose it's no use asking. We'll just have to wait and find out."

The captain chuckled and rose. "Let's see where we be," he remarked. "Reckon that's Santiago over yonder." He pointed to a broad bay protected by numerous islets.

"Will we be at Uraba to-night?" asked Paul.

"We'd fetch the gulf 'long 'bout midnight, if we kept a-going," replied the captain. "Dunno anything about this 'ere coast, though," he added, "and I reckon we'll run in and anchor for the night. 'Tain't safe running along a strange coast where there's no lights."

Sundown found the yacht safely moored in a snug little inlet and with no sign of settlement or human habitation to break the vast forest that stretched from the shores to the mountains of the interior.

"It's like a new and unexplored land," declared Harry.

"Pretty wild spot," admitted the captain. "There's quite a bit o' Colombia that's not inhabited, leastways by civilized folks, and I expect there's a heap that's not even been explored."

"Can't we go ashore for a hunt?" asked Harry.

"The woods are just full of birds and animals."

"No, sir-r-e-e," said the captain positively.

"Yonder bush is a risky spot for a chap without a native along. There's p'isen snakes a-plenty, not to mention Injuns, what might be a-hanging about with blow-guns looking for a chance to pot ye."

"Oh, you're just joking," said Paul. "There aren't really any savage Indians in there, are there?"

"Dunno," replied the captain. "Maybe there ain't, but I've known o' folks being attacked by 'em, and I'm not going to let you lads take chances. There's plenty of snakes, anyway."

"Are there many poisonous snakes down here, really?" asked Harry.

"Lor' bless you, yes," cried the captain.

"There's rattlers, and moccasins and coral snakes, and bushmasters and parrot snakes and a lot of others."

"What are bushmasters and parrot snakes?" Paul inquired.

"Bushmasters are about the worst snakes a-living in the bush," replied the captain. "They'll go out of their way to bite folks and they're more poisonous than a whole bunch o' Fer de Lance. Parrot snakes are long, slender, green critters. They hide in the bush among the leaves and bite

anything that comes along. Deadliest snake in the tropics, I believe. I once saw a horse bit by one and he dropped dead in less than ten minutes."

"Well, I guess we don't want to go into the woods alone, then," remarked Harry.

The boys had become so accustomed to seeing wild parrots, gaudy macaws and other feathered denizens of the South American forests that the



flocks of these birds which fluttered among the nearby trees scarcely attracted their attention. Monkeys, however, always fascinated them, and they spent their time until dark watching a troop of slender spider monkeys, which were leaping and running about in a lofty tree near the creek, seemingly performing for the boys' special benefit. As soon as darkness fell strange sounds issued from the forest and after the boys had gone to bed they were awakened several times by the unearthly yells of the big howling monkeys that made the night hideous with their cries.

CHAPTER XVI

RAMI GOES FISHING

BEFORE the sun had risen the next morning the "Cormorant" had slipped out from her anchorage and was once more sailing down the long stretch of coast.

About ten o'clock the captain called the boys' attention to the dim outlines of land on the western horizon.

"Yonder's the mountains of Panama," he said. "Just 'round that high point's the gulf. If the old map's right, we'll soon be alongside that wreck, lads."

"Won't we have trouble in finding it?" asked Harry.

"Dunno," replied the captain. "'Cording to the chart, the wreck's a-lying 'twixt a long, narrow island and a reef. Expect her skipper tried to run in without seeing the reef and she sunk t'other side of it. If we can locate that dumb-bell-shaped key it ought to be easy to find the wreck."

"Are you sure it's a treasure ship?" asked Paul.

"Goodness, wouldn't it be splendid to really find treasure, after all?"

"Map's got it marked down in red," answered the captain. "Treasure hunting's uncertain," he added. After a moment he asked: "What would ye do with treasure if ye did find it?"

"Buy a yacht," replied both boys with one accord.

"And go a-treasure hunting in her, I reckon," laughed the captain.

"We'd go cruising to all sorts of places," replied Harry. "But not especially after treasure."

"We never thought of treasure hunting until Harry found that old pirate map; but we've always loved cruising about," explained Paul.

"Well, I hope ye find some," declared the captain, and with a chuckle added: "If ye don't get enough to buy the yacht ye can have my share and welcome."

"I'll promise my share, at any rate," laughed Mr. Rogers.

"Oh, you two are always poking fun at treasure hunting," said Harry.

"Just to get even we'll keep you to that promise when we do find it," announced Paul.

The course of the yacht was now altered and, rounding the point, she was headed due south into the great, almost landlocked gulf. Carefully watch-

ing the coast line and frequently examining the charts, Captain Perkins worked the "Cormorant" slowly along under power and towards some small islands visible near the western shore.

"Reckon that bunch o' keys is the spot," he remarked.

"There's the long, narrow island," cried Harry as they approached closely.

"And there's the reef. I can see the waves breaking on it," shouted Paul.

"Reckon ye're right," agreed the captain after squinting through his glasses. "We'll run behind this first key and drop anchor."

The boys could scarcely wait for everything to be made snug and fast before tumbling into the launch to start on their search for the wreck. As Mr. Rogers was about to step into the boat Rami approached him.

"Me like cartch tha fish for cookey for breakfas', sahib," he said with a salaam. "Mebbe, sar, the capt'n sahib permit Rami take leetle boat to cartch heem."

"Course ye can, Rami," said the captain. "A mess of fish'll taste fine, and the bay's full of 'em. Tom," he said, turning to the sailor, "give Rami the dinghy with a light anchor and plenty o' line."

The launch was headed through a narrow channel between the island and the reef, and the boys were

soon gazing intently down through the clear water, each eager to be the first to discover the ancient wreck. It was easy to see bottom; but here and there great areas of dark-colored marine plants, dense forests of branching corals or rough and cavernous masses of rock made it difficult to distinguish real objects from patches of light and shade. Again and again the searchers thought they had discovered the wreck, only to find that rocks, corals or weeds had deceived them, for the refraction of the water caused natural growths to assume weird forms and shapes, which seemed to hover and drift about with the gentle motion of the sea.

Back and forth they hunted until their necks ached and their eyes were strained, and at last, tired, disappointed and hungry, they abandoned the search for the day and headed for the yacht, which was out of sight beyond the islet.

"Reckon we're bound to go without finding treasure," remarked the captain. "This 'ere wreck must a-shifted or been grown over if that map's right. Hunting for a needle in a hay rick's nothing compared to hunting a wreck, if the chart's a bit off."

"I think it's an awful shame," exclaimed Harry. "This is the last wreck. Just as likely as not it's the only one that had treasure, too."

"We'll have another look at that chart," said the

captain. "Try to get the bearings and have another search in the morning. I'm not a-going to give up and stop you lads from getting that yacht just yet," he laughed uproariously.

"You can laugh all you please, but I've a feeling we'll find something yet," declared Paul.

When they reached the yacht Tom told them Rami had not arrived.

"I seed him roundin' that there p'int," said the sailor. "Said as 'ow 'e wuz a-goin' to try 'is luck 'longside o' them reefs."

"I wonder if we hadn't best go over and look for him," suggested Mr. Rogers. "Perhaps he may be in trouble."

"Reckon not," said the captain. "More likely he don't know how late it's a-getting. When a chap's a-fishing, time's no account."

"Here he comes now," cried Paul.

The others looked where he pointed and saw Rami just emerging from behind the low, brushy point of a tiny island a few hundred yards distant. He was soon alongside the yacht and with a basket full of fish climbed to the deck.

"I see you've had good luck, Rami," said Mr. Rogers. "We were just thinking of going after you, fearing something was wrong."

Rami bowed. "Oh, sahib," he said. "Rami mos' ver' mooch sorry, sar. Me larst tha anklor,

sar. Me mek to draw he up, sahib, but he not come. Me pull mooch hard an' when fin' he stuck too well me mek to heetch leetle board to rope. Mebbe the captain sahib can get he. Me look down an' see he cartch fas' in one ol' dead sheep."

"What's that you say?" cried the captain. "Caught in a ship, you say? Lor', I'll bet Rami's found the wreck, lads."

"Hurrah for old Rami!" shouted Harry.

"And he's left it all buoyed so we can find it again," cried Paul.

"Come along, lads. Tumble aboard the launch. We'll have a look afore dark," exclaimed the captain. "Come on, Rami," he added as the others hurried into the launch. "Ye got to show us where 'tis, ye old rascal."

There was no need of Rami's help, however. As soon as the launch rounded the end of the islet everyone caught sight of the bit of board floating upon the water and marking the anchor which the Hindu had been unable to draw up.

In a moment they were beside it, the motor was stopped and all crowded to the sides of the boat and peered over. Rapidly their eyes followed down the curving, hempen line that led from the bobbing plank to the bottom, which was already growing dim with the fading light of the late afternoon. But one glance was enough.

"It's a wreck," shouted Paul.

"I'll bet it's the treasure ship," cried Harry.

"Well, well, well!" exclaimed the captain.

"Rami, you caught quite a fish when you hooked that," laughed Mr. Rogers.

"Yas, sar. Thank you, sar," smiled the Hindu.

"Oh, dear! It's getting dark so fast we can hardly see it," sighed Harry.

"No use a-trying to do anything to-night, lads," declared the captain. "The wreck can't get away, and it's marked so we can find it easy enough. Bright and early to-morrow morning we'll run the yacht over here and then for a trip down in the diving suit."

All that evening the boys could talk of nothing but the wreck and they plied the captain with questions. Did he think it was the wreck of the treasure ship? Might it be some other wreck? Did he think there would be any treasure in it? Would he let them go down? To those and a thousand similar queries the captain replied as best he could as he chuckled and laughed, apparently enjoying the excitement and prospects of exploring the wreck fully as much as the boys.

"I reckon that's the same wreck we were a-looking for," he said. "Only trouble is the old map's a bit off. It's a-lying jest the same sort o' place, 'twixt a reef and a bit of a narrow island. Most likely the

old chap that made that map got twisted a bit on his bearings. Dunno whether it's a treasure ship or not, but we'll get something out o' it, I'll wager. Looks like a good spot to go down in, and if everything works all right I'll let you lads do some diving. Water's pretty shaller there."

"Rami will have to get a share of any treasure we find," declared Paul. "If it hadn't been for him we'd never have found the wreck."

The others all laughed at the boy's seriousness.

"Lor', lad. Wait till ye get the loot afore ye begin a-dividing it up," cried the captain. "Of course the Hindu'll get a share o' anything there is."

The boys were up betimes the next morning and as soon as breakfast was finished the "Cormorant" was run over to the spot where Rami's buoy still floated at the end of the anchor rope. The yacht was moored securely at stem and stern, and while the boys looked on with intense interest or helped here and there, the air pump was rigged up, the diving suit was brought out, the ladder was lowered over the side and preparations were made for a descent to the wreck. After some consultation it was decided to let Tom descend first in order to test the suit and apparatus, and with the help of the boys and Mr. Rogers the captain soon had the sailor encased in the rubber costume.

"I'll tend the lifeline, Tom," remarked the cap-

tain as the great helmet was slipped over Tom's head. "Sorry we haven't got one o' them new-fangled outfits, with telephone and all, but 'tain't needed here. Water's that clear we can see ye all the time, and 'tain't like wandering about through hatches and staterooms in new wrecks."

"S'help me, it's been so bloomin' long since I wuz down I mos' forgot 'ow it feels," remarked Tom while the captain made the final adjustments. "So long, mates," he cried as the captain started to screw the glass face-plate in position. "Look alive for a treasure chest a-comin' up."

Everything was now ready; the other sailor and Mr. Rogers manned the air pump and the captain stood at the rail with the air hose and lines. Tom, clambering clumsily down the ladder, released his hold and sank slowly down through the transparent water, while a tiny line of silvery air bubbles rose from his helmet to the surface. The boys watched his descent almost breathlessly.

"He's on the bottom," cried Harry at last.

"He's walking around the wreck," exclaimed Paul.

"He's loosened Rami's anchor and is tying it to the rope," announced Harry.

"He's signaling to haul it up," said the captain. "Reckon he wants to get it out of the way."

The boys soon had the anchor on board and again

turned their attention to Tom, walking, half stooping as divers do, about the ancient coral-encrusted timbers far below them.

"Now he's digging among the timbers," cried Paul. "I can see him prying with a crowbar. Hurrah! he's found something," he shouted. "I can see him tying a rope to it."

Again the signal to haul up the rope was given and the boys, with Rami's help, slowly drew in the line, which had some heavy object attached to the other end.



"It's a cannon," exclaimed Paul as the object appeared above water.

"And a mighty old one by the looks of it," declared the captain.

Three more cannons were sent up in rapid succession and then Tom signaled that he wished to be drawn to the surface.

"What's up, Tom?" asked the captain as he removed the face-plate. "Anything wrong down there?"

"No, sir; nothing wrong, sir," replied the sailor. "Jest come aloft arter a bag for to send these 'ere up. Blow me, if I can make 'em fast to the line." He opened his hand and tossed a number of roundish objects upon the deck.

"They look like sand dollars," exclaimed Harry

as he stooped to pick up some of the objects. "Goodness," he cried as he lifted one, "aren't they heavy!"

The captain had also seized one of the strange things, and drawing his knife, scraped away the surface.

"Sand dollars," he almost shouted. "Ha, ha, ha! Dollars they be, lads; good old Spanish dollars. Gold onzas, lads, gold onzas! Ye've struck treasure trove at last!" Seizing the two boys, he danced wildly about the deck.



Still laughing and chuckling, he turned to Tom, who sat grinning at the head of his ladder.

"Many of them down there?" he cried.

"S'help me, yes, sir," replied the sailor. "Blow me if they ain't a-lyin' all about where I 'auled out that last gun, sir."

"Hurrah!" shouted Harry. "Then it's really a treasure ship."

"Perhaps they were merely the captain's private money or the ship's specie," said Mr. Rogers, who had been carefully examining the coins with their coating of marine growths. "Don't be too greatly elated," he continued. "There may be no other treasure on the wreck."

"Oh, do let us go down and find them!" begged Paul. "We may never have another chance to dive after real sunken treasure."

"How about it, Tom?" asked the captain. "Do you reckon the lads could go down?"

"Yes, sir," replied the sailor. "Easy as not. O' course they'll feel a bit queer first off. There ain't no mite o' danger, sir. Ye can see 'em all the time they're down."

"All right, lads," cried the captain. "If Rogers is willing ye can each go down. I'm not a-going to let ye stop long, though. Just pick up what ye can and come up. Who's going first?"

"Let Paul go first," said Harry. "He's the older."

Tom had now been divested of his suit and Paul, feeling not a little nervous, commenced putting on the rubber clothing.

"Whew! It's heavy," he exclaimed as the massive metal collar was placed over his shoulders. "I won't be able to move."

"Ye'll find it light enough when ye're under water," the captain assured him. "The suit's a bit full for ye," he added. "Made big enough for me, ye see. But we'll lift ye over and drop ye down, and ye'll be all right. Feel scarey?"

Paul insisted he was not a bit frightened and a moment later the face-plate had been screwed on,

and the boy in his baggy suit was lifted and dropped gently over the side.

Paul's sensations as he half-floated, half-floundered downwards were strange and novel, and yet he was not at all afraid, but felt quite elated and exhilarated as he slowly descended. So gently did he land upon the sandy bottom that he scarce knew he had reached the bed of the sea. Glancing about, he saw the wreck close at hand and looming huge, weird and massive in the strange blue light. He started towards it, but was instantly lifted from his feet and after one or two attempts found he must bend forward and maintain a stooping posture in order to keep his footing when walking. As he came close to the wreck he looked carefully about and soon saw the bits of broken coral and water-soaked, decayed wood where Tom had dragged forth the cannon. Bending close, he caught sight of numbers of the little round disks which he knew were coins and, dropping to his knees, he hastily gathered them up and piled them into the canvas bag he had brought down. He was still busy when a tug at the line warned him that he must leave the fascinating spot and without stopping to think of the unusual conditions which surrounded him, he rose quickly. Instantly he lost his footing and swayed forward towards the wreck. Instinctively he threw out his hands, but instead of falling heavily

as he expected, he merely settled among the ancient timbers as lightly as a feather. Laughing inwardly at the strange sensation, the boy started to regain his feet. As he did so his hand came in contact with some hard, angular object in the soft, oozy sand, and as he grasped it the rope was pulled taut and the next instant he was being rapidly hoisted towards the surface. As he swayed and turned about he glanced up and with the keenest interest noted the strange appearance of objects above when viewed from under the sea. The round bottom of the yacht seemed to occupy an enormous space, the rudder and propeller looked huge and long streamers of grass and weeds floated from the copper sheathing. At the water line the yacht seemed to be cut completely in two and the dim, shadowy outlines of her upper works and the indistinct figures of the men upon her decks looked out of proportion, grotesque and entirely separated from the rest of the vessel. He seemed to move slowly and with a wonderfully soft, resistless sensation, but he had scarce time to analyze his feelings when his head emerged from the water and he was hauled up and onto the deck.

“How does it feel?” cried Harry as soon as the face-plate was opened.

“More like a toy balloon being tossed about than anything else,” laughed Paul.



He saw the wreck close at hand.

Courtesy The Williamson Brothers Submarine Expedition, Universal Motion Pictures

“Did you find the coins?” asked Mr. Rogers.

“Here they are,” answered Paul, holding out the bag. “Here’s something else I found.” He exhibited the angular thing he had picked up.

The captain took it, hefted it, scratched it with his knife and gave a shout.

“Treasure trove, treasure trove!” he cried. “Lads, lads, yonder’s a treasure ship sure enough. That bit o’ stuff’s a bar o’ gold bullion.”

The others crowded eagerly about and examined Paul’s find. Although covered with an encrustation of small shells, worm tubes and bryozoans, the rectangular form was easily seen, and as soon as the marine growths were scraped off the metal gleamed as brightly as on the day when it was first run into a mold, hundreds of years before.

“Is there more there? How much is it worth? Do let me go down!” cried Harry, beside himself with excitement.

“I didn’t have time to hunt,” said Paul.

“Reckon it weighs about five pound, and at sixteen dollars an ounce it’ll be pretty nigh a thousand dollars,” replied the captain.

“Whew!” exclaimed Paul. “A thousand dollars in that little thing? What are these gold coins worth?”

“About \$17.00 each,” replied Mr. Rogers. “I saw some in a money-changer’s at Havana and in-

quired about them. Possibly to a collector they might be worth more."

"Reckon not," said the captain. "These Spanish coins ain't any use 'ceptin' as bullion. Fifteen to twenty dollars is what onzas most usually bring."

Harry now lost no time in getting into the diving suit and, determined to outdo Paul, he signaled that all was ready and was soon being lowered towards the wreck. His sensations were much the same as those of his cousin, but as Paul had already warned him of the trouble in walking erect and the danger of moving too quickly, he found less difficulty in moving upon the bottom and searching about the wreck. He readily found the mass of coins which had dropped out through the opening made by Tom and hastily filling his bag he hunted diligently for more bars of gold. He saw none and was about to give up in despair when his eye caught sight of a loosened bit of wood which seemed to bulge outward as if being pressed from behind. Steadying himself by holding onto a timber, Harry seized the loose board and pulled. It came away easily and from the aperture tumbled dozens of the squarish objects, which the boy knew to be bars of gold.

The captain was now pulling on the line and, grabbing two of the ingots, Harry gave the signal and was soon aboard the yacht.

"Hurrah! We've almost enough to buy our

yacht," cried Paul as Harry dumped the contents of his bag onto the skylight and laid the two ingots beside Paul's.

"And there's lots and lots more of them," cried Harry. "There's a regular fortune down there."

Captain Perkins was almost as excited as the boys and insisted on going down next. He came up with one bag filled with the onzas and another full of ingots in a very short time, and as his face-plate was unfastened he exclaimed: "Lor'! No more diving for me. I'm a-getting too old and too fat. Felt as if I'd bust all the time I was down. Wouldn't a-missed it for the world, though. Treasure hunting's the game for me, lads. Never thought I'd actually live to claw onzas and bullion from an old wreck."

"Now, Tom," he said, when at last the diving suit had been taken off and he had recovered his breath, "we'll just get to work right and yank the rest o' that treasure up systematic. Take down a bar and a canvas sling and just pull the stuff out and send it up as fast as ye can. Time's a-flying, and for all we know bad weather may come on afore we're done."

Tom soon descended and for over an hour toiled below, while sling after sling of coins, bullion and cannon were drawn up to the yacht.

At last the sailor signaled to be hauled up.

"S'help me, that's all I'm good for," he exclaimed when the helmet had been taken off. "I'm that done ye could knock me hover with a feather."

"All right, lad," cried the captain. "Take a spell o' rest and to-morrow we'll get the balance o' the stuff. Is there much left?"

"No, sir," replied the sailor. "Couldn't see narthin' more, sir. The bloomin' old hooker's gone pretty nigh all to pieces, sir. Blow me, if I don't think as 'ow she's let most o' her cargo drop into the mud where it's no use a huntin', if ye arsk me, 'ceptin' ye brings a dredge along."

"Let's count up and see what we've got," suggested Harry. "My, but we must be millionaires with all that treasure!"

"Not quite millionaires, I guess," laughed his uncle. "But certainly you have more gold scattered over the deck here than most people see in a lifetime."

"Now, aren't you sorry you laughed at us?" said Harry.

"And told us we could have your share?" taunted Paul.

"That's all right, boys," laughed Mr. Rogers. "I'll stand by my guns. I admit your treasure hunt has been a huge success, and I'll never laugh at anything of the sort again, but you're welcome to my share. You deserve it."

As they talked the boys were gathering the coins and ingots into piles, while the captain examined and counted them and Mr. Rogers jotted down the number in his notebook.

When at last they had gone over the entire lot they found that the treasure consisted of 21 bars of silver, 10 ingots of gold, 208 Spanish gold onzas, 320 Spanish silver dollars or "pieces of eight," as the captain called them, six large bronze guns and three bronze carronades.

"How much does all that make?" asked Harry when all had been tabulated.

"I dunno exactly," replied the captain, "but I can figure it out pretty close."

Taking a pencil and paper, he seated himself under the awning while the boys squatted among their piles of treasure.

"Let's see," began the captain. "Silver's worth about sixty cents an ounce. That's \$7.20 a pound, and these bars weigh about ten pound each. That makes \$72.00 a bar, and twenty-one bars, \$1,512.00. The gold's worth 'bout sixteen dollars an ounce or \$192.00 a pound. The ingots weigh somewheres around five pound each, so each one's worth close onto \$960.00, and there's ten of 'em, so you've got 'bout \$9,600.00 worth o' gold bullion. The onzas will fetch about \$17.00 each or \$3,536.00, and the pieces o' eight are worth about half a dollar each or

say \$160.00 for the lot. I reckon we've got about \$200.00 worth o' old bronze, and that all figures up to \$15,008.00."

"Whew!" cried Paul. "Fifteen thousand dollars from that old wreck. Hurrah! We *can* buy a yacht now!"

"How did the old pirates divide their treasure?" asked Harry. "We ought to share ours the same way."

"Dunno exactly," replied the captain. "I've read as how they most generally gave one part, say a fifth or a sixth, to be divided equal among the crew and then shared the balance among the officers. Reckon that's a pretty fair way, lads. What do you say?"

"Well, Rami'll have to be counted as an officer," declared Harry. "We'll give one part to be divided among the two sailors and then we'll divide the rest by five. Do you think that's all right?"

"There are seven on board. Suppose we call it one-seventh for the crew," suggested Paul.

"That's a good scheme," said Mr. Rogers. "After you've everything on board we'll divide it in that way."

"Might as well get the loot cleaned up and stowed away," remarked the captain. "Can't leave a heap o' gold a-lying around on deck over night."

Tom brought some empty boxes and soon every-

one was busy scraping the marine growths from the coins and ingots and stowing the treasure in the cases.

As they worked the boys speculated upon the name and country of the wreck and the length of time she had lain upon the bottom of the gulf. The dates on the coins were easily legible in most cases and ranged from 1610 to 1705.

“That proves she was not sunk until after 1705, at any rate,” said Mr. Rogers as the coin with the most recent date was examined.

“Reckon she wasn’t one o’ Morgan’s ships,” said the captain. “He sacked Panama in 1671. Likely as not some of these guns will have writing on ’em. Let’s clean ’em up and see.”

Curious to discover anything which would throw light upon the history of their find, the boys left the rest of the treasure to the sailors’ care and with Mr. Rogers and the captain gave their attention to the corroded, bronze cannon. For some time nothing was discovered and then Paul knocked a piece of coral from the breech of a carronade and exclaimed:

“Here are some letters, captain. They’re quite distinct.”

The letters, deeply engraved upon the gun, were easily seen and the captain examined them carefully.

“Fetch a brush and some water, Tom,” he said. “Can’t make nothing o’ this ’til it’s cleaned up a bit.”

A thorough scrubbing did much to make the inscription legible and the captain studied it for some time while the boys peered over his shoulder.

“Those old Spanish chaps were great for using abbreviations,” he remarked. “Reckon it saved a heap o’ work, cutting in letters ’stead o’ words. I can most generally make ’em out, though. When ye’ve been a-carryin’ cargoes all marked with letters and signs for fifty year or so a man gets used to such puzzles. Only trouble is these old folks didn’t care what lingo they used. Sometimes ’twas Spanish, other times Italian and now and again Latin. Reckon this is Spanish, though. Let’s see. Here ’tis. ‘A’o. D’o. 1640. D’n’a. Y’s’t’a. A’r’a. To.’ And the coat o’ arms o’ Castile and Leon.”

“What does all that mean?” asked Paul. “Does it tell what the ship was?”

“No and yes,” laughed the captain. “According to my ideas, it means A.D. 1640. Donna Ysleta. Armeria Toledo. I reckon ‘Donna Ysleta’s’ the name o’ the ship, and the gun was made at Toledo along in 1640. Like as not the old wreck’s the ‘Donna Ysleta,’ but then again for all we know the gun may have been captured and changed hands a dozen times afore it went down on this craft. I’ve

seen old Spanish guns used for signaling aboard British and Yankee merchantmen many a time."

"Then we'll never know what ship this was," said Paul.

"Probably not," said his father, "unless you should find some old naval records which related the history of the 'Donna Ysleta' and other ships of her time."

"Reckon it don't make much if any difference," laughed the captain, "s'long as the treasure's been found. Just as likely she's the 'Ysleta' as any other craft."



"Oh, I've a bully idea!" exclaimed Harry. "We'll call our yacht the 'Ysleta,' after the wreck."

"That's fine," agreed Paul.

"And we'll clean up the old bell and one of these guns and put them on her," Harry added.

"Reckon the old bell and some o' these guns *can* be cleaned up fit to use," said the captain.

The last of the treasure had now been cleaned, packed and safely stored below, and while the sail-

ors swabbed the dirt and muss from the decks the others stretched themselves in chairs beneath the awnings and discussed the events of this wonderful day and made plans for the future.

“What *are* we going to do with all this treasure?” asked Paul. “Can we take it home with us as it is?”

“I’ve been considering that,” replied Mr. Rogers. “I think the best plan is to deposit it in some bank in Colon and take drafts in return. I presume there are firms who attend to such matters there.”

“Reckon that’s a good scheme,” agreed the captain. “I know a banker there who’ll do the trick. He’s just the chap, as he’s always taken gold from the mines and all sorts of produce and stuff, sort o’ banking-commission-merchant. Moreover, he’ll keep mum and won’t be answering questions as to where the stuff comes from. O’ course it don’t make much difference—after we get all the treasure there is—but there’s no use a-starting all the scum o’ the Isthmus searching for treasure round here. For all we know we may want to come treasure hunting again ourselves. Eh, lads?”

“It still seems like a dream to me,” remarked Harry. “I can’t really believe we’ve found treasure. It’s just like a story.”

“I’ve got a couple of onzas in my pocket, where

I can feel them and know they're real," announced Paul.

They all laughed at Paul's scheme to convince himself of the reality of the treasure and soon afterwards the boys retired to their bunks to dream of galleons, pirates and gold until aroused by the cheery hail of the captain.

CHAPTER XVII

THE CAPTAIN SPRINGS A SURPRISE

“WELL, lads,” he cried, as they came to breakfast, “how about the treasure this morning? Begun to realize ye’re rich yet?”

The boys laughed. “I’ve the onzas in my pocket yet,” said Paul.

“Treasure’s safe and sound,” chuckled the captain. “Took a squint at it myself. Nobody ran off with it in the night.”

“I really believe you feel just as we do about it,” declared Harry. “You knew nobody had touched it and just looked to be sure it wasn’t all a dream.”

“Dunno but ye’re right,” said the captain with a laugh. “Let’s hurry up and see if there’s any more down in the wreck.”

It was not long before they were all on deck and Tom was ready to go down in the diving suit. A number of silver bars, a few coins and another cannon were sent up and then Tom came to the surface.

“Narthin’ more down there, sir,” he announced. “It’s jest the poop o’ the bloomin’ ol’ hooker what’s

a-showin' of above the bottom. Most o' her bally hull's sunk clean out o' sight. Blow me, but she must 'a' been a-lyin' there a precious while, sir. No use a-tryin' of to do narthin' more without a dredge, sir."

"Reckon ye're right, Tom," said the captain. "Been a-studying of the wreck myself. Those old-time hookers had poops way aloft and was low for'ard and 'midships. Likely as not the old craft bust in two and for'ard half's gone years ago. Reckon the treasure we got was all in the lazarette above the main deck. Well, we've got a-plenty. No use a-being too greedy. Might just as well stow the diving outfit and head for Colon."

"Perhaps we can come back some time with a dredge," said Paul.

The captain laughed heartily. "Why, lad," he exclaimed, "a dredge that would fetch up what's sunk in the bottom yonder would cost more'n ye'll get from all the treasure. Likely as not ye wouldn't find anything more, even if ye did dredge. Shouldn't be a mite surprised if the old craft bust up on the reef and just one end of her drifted in here."

"Well, I'm satisfied as it is," declared Harry.

"You're certainly about the most fortunate boys in the world," said Mr. Rogers. "Not many can boast that they've taken a small fortune from an ancient wreck in the Spanish Main."

Soon the creak of the windlass was heard, the anchors were raised and the "Cormorant," with her cargo of gold, bore northward across the gulf while the two boys cast longing looks towards the little islets far astern.



About noon they passed the little town of Acia.

"Yonder's where an old Scotchman tried to found a settlement of Britishers," said the captain. "His name was William Paterson, same chap as founded the Bank of England. He started a colony here in 1698 but was driven out in 1700. Place is still called Caledonia Bay."

When the sun sank behind the lofty mountains of the Isthmus, Playon Chico could be seen amid the palms and foliage a few miles distant.

"I had no idea there were such high mountains in Panama," remarked Paul. "How did they ever dig a canal across them?"

"Lor' bless your heart!" cried the captain. "They didn't dig across those mountains. Down hereabouts they're pretty nigh a mile high, but atwixt Colon and Panama they're not over a thousand feet anywhere and the canal runs through

Culebra Pass where it's not over two hundred and ninety feet above the sea."

The boys awoke the next morning to find the islands of the Mulatas Archipelago close at hand, while ahead loomed Cape San Blas with the mountains low and indistinct beyond the gently-sloping hills and broad, forest-covered savannas of the coastal plain. Before noon they passed Palenque and two hours later the captain pointed out Porto Bello.

"Yonder's the Atlantic end o' the old Gold Road," he remarked. "I expect you lads would be glad of a chance to take a look about the old place. Reckon we might as well run in and spend a couple o' hours ashore. We can easy make Colon at sundown."

The boys found Porto Bello's ruins very interesting. They wandered through the ancient fortifications, looked seaward from the quaint, lantern-like sentry-boxes, and examined the arms and shields emblazoned above the arched gateways.

"It looks as old as San Domingo," remarked Paul. "When were these old forts built?"

"Dunno as I can tell ye the exact date," replied the captain. "Columbus landed here in 1503 and started a colony, but the folks was all killed off by Injuns and 'twasn't till along in 1510 that the Spaniards got a foothold on the Isthmus. For a spell

the Atlantic port was Cruces, then it was shifted to Nombre de Dios and then to Porto Bello. Colon wasn't built till 1849, when the Panama railway was laid across the Isthmus."

"It was a fortunate thing that the railway and canal were built from Colon instead of Porto Bello,"

remarked Mr. Rogers.

"Such enterprises would have doubtless resulted in the destruction of these ruins of stirring early days. They should be preserved and cared for as monuments of great historical interest."



"I wonder if there isn't any hidden treasure here," said Paul.

"Lor', but ye lads *are* keen on treasure hunting," laughed the captain. "But ye needn't fret about that. Old Morgan didn't leave more than a heap o' smoking ruins behind him here and in Panama. I'll bet ye he took away every centavo that was in the place."

"For all we know the treasure we've found may have come from here," remarked Harry.

"Right ye are," cried the captain. "I'll wager

if those old onzas and pieces o' eight could tell their story 'twould be some yarn."

Leaving the harbor of Porto Bello the yacht sailed close to the shore and before sunset passed the long breakwater at Toro Point and entered the harbor of Colon.

There were so many interesting things to be seen that the boys scarcely knew which way to turn. The pretty American suburb of Christobal, the busy docks, the huge steamships, the great railway terminal, the crowds of people and the entrance to the wonderful canal all occupied the boys' attention while the customs and quarantine formalities were being attended to.

"Let's hop ashore and see some o' the sights," suggested the captain. "'Tain't much of a town and it's pleasantest in the evening."

The boys found the streets of the city neat and clean but most of the buildings were very flimsy wooden affairs of no interest.

"Place has been burned down time and again," said the captain. "Blessed good thing it was too, in the old days—only way to keep the place clean."

"A fire would wipe it out completely, I should imagine," remarked Mr. Rogers. "These light wooden houses must be like tinder."

"Well, they're a-building the newer ones o' concrete now. All the best folks live over at Christobal

though. Pretty nice spot, but even Colon's a heap better than the last time I was here."

A very pleasant drive was taken to the little American settlement at Christobal, with its wide, smooth streets, groves of palms and attractive villas. Roosevelt Avenue, following the curve of the beach close to the water, and shaded with a double



row of palms; the palatial Hotel Washington, and the cold-storage plant of the Canal Commission were all visited and the boys stopped to admire the beautiful statue of Columbus on

the lawn before the residence of De Lesseps.

"It's all mighty nice and clean and pretty now," remarked the captain. "But ye'd ought to have seen it twenty-five years back. All this new part yonder waste swamp; streets full of dirt; ruins of burned houses standing everywhere and over in the old canal big dredges, steamboats and machinery lying rusty and abandoned. Folks that come here now with everything going smooth and the ditch dug don't realize what the Yankees had afore 'em when they started in."

"It was a marvelous achievement of course, and I don't suppose the average American does realize

what such work in the tropics means," said Mr. Rogers.

"I don't know much about digging canals," replied the captain, "and I suppose it's just a matter o' mechanics and money, but I do know that they've fair made over the whole Isthmus. Turned one o' the biggest fever holes on earth into a clean, pretty-looking, healthy spot, and that I reckon's more of a job than a-digging the big ditch. Leastwise, doing that's the most *reemarkable* part o' the canal work, to my mind."

"I quite agree with you," said Mr. Rogers. "And yet not one person in a thousand who travels through the canal will give a thought to it."

The next morning the captain accompanied the boys and Mr. Rogers on a visit to his banker friend and arrangements were soon made to dispose of the bullion and coins.

"It will be an easy matter to weigh and appraise the gold and silver," the banker said. "It's just as good as money and I'll see that you have the drafts before we close this afternoon."

"So you're really successful treasure-hunters," he said to the boys. "I've never met one before. It's really marvelous that you should have found the old wreck and the riches. I've heard of such things but I certainly never expected to have treasure-trove stored in my own safes."

"How about getting the bullion through the customs house?" asked Mr. Rogers. "Won't there be any difficulty about that?"

"I'll attend to that," the banker assured them. "I'll send two of my best men to the dock with a truck and you can leave everything in their hands."

Before noon the last of the boxes of treasure had been carted away and in the afternoon the party again called on the banker.

"The value of the coins and ingots is a trifle less than your estimate, Captain Perkins," said the banker referring to a slip on the table in his office. "It totals \$14,364. I understand you wish drafts of various sums. If you'll let me know the amounts of each I'll have them issued at once."

"We were going to divide one seventh between the two sailors," said Paul. "That's \$2,052, or \$1,026 each. Then the balance of \$12,312 is to be equally divided between the other five, making \$2,462.40 each."

"Then I'm to make out two drafts for \$1,026 and five for \$2,462.40 each—is that correct?" asked the banker.

"Hold on a bit," cried Mr. Rogers, laughing. "The boys have forgotten they're entitled to my share. Make out two drafts for \$3,693.60 each and one for \$2,462.40 instead of the five."

"Rogers and I'd like to speak to ye a minute in

private," said the captain with a wink. "Set right where ye be, lads," he added.

"I'd like to know what they're planning," remarked Harry, when the others had withdrawn. "But I suppose we'll soon know. The cruise is over and they can't keep us waiting much longer."

Presently the three men returned and the banker handed each of the boys a long envelope.

The captain's eyes twinkled merrily and he shook with suppressed laughter as he watched the boys draw out the crisp drafts.

"Why, this isn't right," exclaimed Paul. "It's for \$4,924.80."

"So is mine," announced Harry.

"And mine's made payable in San Francisco," cried Paul.

"And mine is too," said Harry.

"That's perfectly shipshape," roared the captain. "Told ye I'd give ye my share if ye didn't get enough for your yacht. I reckon ye ain't got any more'n ye need now. And they're made out for 'Frisco 'cause that's where we're bound. Been a-wanting to go to that exposition all along. Goin' to leave the 'Cormorant' down here, take you lads across the Isthmus through the canal and up to the Fair and s'prise Mrs. Rogers. Like as not ye'll find a yacht that'll suit ye there. Had it planned for weeks; ain't we, Rogers?"

"Well, that *is* a surprise," exclaimed Paul.

"I knew you two were up to something," declared Harry. "But I never dreamed it was anything so fine."

"Won't mother be surprised to see us!" cried Paul.

"Not a bit more surprised than I was when Captain Perkins first suggested the trip," laughed Mr. Rogers. "But it's such an exceptional opportunity I couldn't let it pass."

When Rami received his share of the treasure money he was quite overcome and could scarcely believe that he was actually the possessor of so much ready cash.

"What are you going to do with it?" asked Paul.

"If Sahib Rogers please to permit, me mek call to Bombay," replied the Hindu. "Me mooch want to see he. Mos' surely Rami come again to cookey for tha sahibs."

"That's a very sensible plan, Rami," said Mr. Rogers. "You can sail from here and remain away until we return to New York."

"Yes, sar, thank you, sar," smiled the cook.

"Don't you fail to come back," Paul admonished him.

"No, Rami; you must come back," added Harry. "We're going to have a new yacht of our own and we couldn't get along without you."

“In surely me come for cookey for yacht,” Rami assured them.

The two sailors were fully as pleased as was Rami at their good fortune.

Henry, the Barbados sailor, declared he was going back and buy an estate on the island, but later changed his mind and announced that he would purchase a small schooner and trade between the various ports.

“Beggin’ your pardon, sir,” said Tom, approaching the captain. “If ye don’t mind I’ll be a-goin’ ’long o’ ye to the bloomin’ Fair. I’ve a sister in ’Frisco as I ’aven’t seen for ten year and blow me, if I hadn’t been a-thinkin’ o’ shippin’ on a Pacific boat, soon as ye’d let me orf, sir.”

“Glad to have ye go, Tom,” declared the captain. “Ye’ll have a fine time and I’ll be glad to have ye come along back and ship on the ‘Cormorant’ again. If the lads buy a yacht in ’Frisco ye can sailor with ’em along back. I’m a-going to lay the ‘Cormorant’ up here, so get busy, lad, and have everything snug and shipshape.”

The next few days were busy ones for all on board the yacht, for there was much to be done in preparation for leaving her until the captain’s return.

Sails were unbent and stowed, top-hamper was

sent down, deck-houses and brass work were covered with canvas and tarpaulin, the motor was overhauled and oiled, and a thousand and one other details were attended to. At last all was ready and the boys, who had been living ashore for several days, saw the dismantled yacht towed to her berth and turned over to a caretaker in the local shipyard. The work was finished just in time and the next morning the party boarded the steamship for San Francisco and an hour later were entering the great canal.

Much as the boys had read of the canal it proved a revelation to them at every turn. The enormous locks filled them with wonder; the powerful little electric locomotives which pulled the great liner through the locks fascinated them and they were deeply interested in the many safeguards which had been provided to prevent accidents to ships or canal.

"It doesn't seem possible that man could have accomplished such a work," declared Harry as they entered the vast Culebra Cut. "It's like digging a great river through a mountain chain."

"Why, they're still dredging over there," exclaimed Paul.

"Landslide," said an officer who stood near. "Have 'em every little while here. Last trip we

were held up two days, waiting for the dredges to clear the channel."

"Yes, and I reckon they'll have 'em long as there's any ditch here," exclaimed the captain. "I've seen mountains what have been a-sliding that way for over a hundred years and are still a-slipping off every time there's a heavy rain. 'Tain't like the mountains up north. These are so rotten I reckon they can keep a-sliding as long as there's a mite o' hill left to slide."

Through the broad Gatun Lake the ship passed and the captain pointed to landmarks he remembered having seen on former trips across by railway and which were now deep beneath the water, although at one time high above the bottom of the valley and covered with dense forests. It was a strange sensation to be sailing in a great ocean steamship in the narrow waterway between the wooded mountains and the boys enjoyed every moment of the trip.

At last the ship was beyond the divide and entered the locks on the Pacific slope and, looking ahead, the boys caught a glimpse of blue water sparkling and shimmering in the sunshine.

For a space they gazed in silence, thrilled, as was Balboa, by their first view of the broad western ocean. A moment later they saw the twin cathedral

towers, their pearl-shell encrusted roofs gleaming like silver from among the palms.

“There’s Panama!” cried Paul.

“Hurrah for the Pacific!” shouted Harry.

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